MAN AND MYSTERY IN ASIA

FERDINAND OSSENDOWSKI

THE ROUTES
OF
DR. OSSENDOWSKI
IN
MAN AND MYSTERY IN ASIA
ARCTIC
OCEA
SIBE
OB R.
YENESEI R.
TO ST. PETERSBURG
OMSK
KAINSK
L. CHANY
KHIRGHIZ STEPPES
L. KULUNDA
IRTYSH R.
L. KUTCHUK
KULUNDA STEPPES
BARNAUL
TOMSK
TOM R.
KRASNOYARSK
KUSNETSK
BIISK
KATUN R.
MANA R.
BATENI
TUBA R.
IRKUTSK
L. KOSOGOL
ONGUDAI
GREAT ALTAI MTS.
MINUSINSK
OUTER
M
TURKESTAN

COMMANDER
COPPER
ISLAND
BEHRING
ISLAND
ISLANDS
MARKOVO
KAMCHATKA
PETROPAVLOVSK
OKHOTSK SEA
ST. JONAS
ISLAND
SHANTAR
ISLANDS
CAPE
ELIZABETH
CAPE
MARIA
NIKOLAIEVSK
AMUR R.
NIKOLAIEVSK
TARTAR PASSAGE
SAKHALIN ISLAND
ALEXANDROVSK
KURILE ISLANDS
OLEKMA R.
ZEYA R.
BUREYA R.
HABAROVSK
USSURI R.
SUNGACHA R.
L. HANKA
KAMEN RIBOLOFF
NIKOLSK-USSURISK
VLADIVOSTOK
PUTIATIN ISLAND
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MAN AND MYSTERY IN ASIA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

BEASTS, MEN AND GODS

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H. F. A. Ostendowski

MAN AND MYSTERY IN ASIA

BY

FERDINAND OSSENDOWSKI

Author of "Beasts, Men and Gods"

IN COLLABORATION WITH

LEWIS STANTON PALEN

Collaborator in "Beasts, Men and Gods"

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

681 FIFTH AVENUE

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DEDICATED

WITH LOVE AND AFFECTION

TO THE MEMORY OF

MY MOTHER

WHO TAUGHT ME

TO SEE, TO FEEL, AND TO ACT

COLLABORATOR'S NOTE

To those who may have read Dr. Ossendowski's first English book, *Beasts, Men and Gods,* there must have occurred questions as to the previous life and training of this man which may have fitted him or even have made it possible for him to live through the entirely unusual experiences which he has recorded in that volume. Many such inquiries have been addressed to me since the book first appeared and have made it apparent that there exists a sufficient interest in the earlier career of this traveler to warrant probing deeper into his far from ordinary life.

As he had already suggested to me that he had seen much that was unusual and interesting in Siberia, which ought not only appeal to those seeking an hour's diversion, but which also merited preservation as a part of the tremendous thus far unwritten record wherein are to be found the geneses of the Russian cataclysm, I enthusiastically fell in with his suggestion to incorporate this material in a series of further volumes and sketched out with him some of these possibilities.

Even with the far-flung horizon which, this first manuscript shows, sought to bound his life, it is almost necessary, if the reader is to possess an adequate plastic in which to set these isolated and highly coloured mosaics

of his unusual career, to know at the outset something further of his antecedents.

It will help the reader to realize some of the mental versatility and physical vigor of this seemingly anachronistic traveler when he learns that Dr. Ossendowski was early recognized as one of the leading authorities on the coals and carboniferous deposits along the Pacific Provinces from the Behring Straits to Korea; that he knows intimately a large percentage of the placer and quartz gold mines of all Siberia; that he acted as Fuel Administrator for the Russian Armies under General Kuropatkin during the Russo-Japanese War; that he was during the Great War also despatched on a special investigating expedition into Mongolia when he acquired his first knowledge of that tongue; that for years he acted as Adviser and assistant in industrial matters to Count Witte during the latter's membership in the Council of State; that he had done distinguishing work in industrial chemistry which subsequently brought him a professorship in science in the Polytechnic Institute at Petrograd, where he also held a chair in industrial geography; that his mining experience carried him to a position as one of the leading directors of the All-Russian Council of Gold and Platinum Miners, and brought with it later the editorship of the mining journal, *Gold and Platinum;* that he was well and prominently known as a journalist and writer in both the Polish and Russian languages, having published more than fifteen volumes of a general character in addition to many scientific brochures and more formal works; that the outbreak of the War found him as Adviser to the Council of the Navy; and that he turned up after the Bolshevik Revolution as a professor in the High Polytechnic Insti-

tute at Omsk after Siberia had been liberated from Bolshevik rule and was from there drafted by Kolchak into service in his government as a Member of the Ministry of Finance and Agriculture. It was the disintegration of this Siberian Government that sent him into the forests of the Yenesei, and gave to us the unique narrative of *Beasts, Men and Gods.*

A chapter in his life that seems somewhat contradictory in fact but is really quite consonant in principle with his known reactions was his Presidency in the last days of 1905 of the Far Eastern Revolutionary Government with its Headquarters at Harbin. Sharing with many Russian subjects the bitter disappointment of the Tsar's repudiation of his manifesto of October 17, 1905, he consented to lead the movement in the Orient that should split eastern Siberia off from Russia and worked for a short sixty days at the head of the organized effort to accomplish this end with sub-committees in Vladivostok, Blagoveschensk, and Chita. When the Revolution of 1905 crumbled, it naturally carried down with it this outpost in the Orient and Dr. Ossendowski, with his associates was arrested and tried.

On the night of January 15/16, 1906, he and Engineers S. Nowakowski, W. Lepeshinsky, Maksimov, Wlasenko, and K. Dreyer, and the lawyer, A. Koslowsky, together with thirty-seven others, were seized. Though he had been forewarned and an escape arranged for him, he preferred to share the fate of his associates and stand trial. In this he was condemned to death, but his sentence was changed to imprisonment for two years through the intervention of Count Witte.

From the time of his arrest and initial incarceration on

January 16, he was alternatively in the Russian prisons of Harbin, Habarovsk, Nikolaievsk, and Vladivostok, and finally in the Fortress of Peter and Paul in Petrograd. Through having served part of his term in the criminal prisons of the Orient, he had his two years commuted by about five months, so that he was released on September 27, 1907, from the Fortress on the Neva.

Of his three chief associates, Nowakowski is now in Posen, Poland, Lepeshinsky is dead, and K. Dreyer during the War was a Director of the Putiloff Works in Petrograd.

With such an intimate knowledge of the inner life of Russian criminal and military prisons, the story of which he will probably embody in his next volume, he knows whereof he speaks when he writes about the conditions in Sakhalin and the fugitive prisoners who come into these pages.

Since the break-up of the Kolchak Government and Dr. Ossendowski's escape from the Bolsheviks back into civilization, he has continued to attach interest to his career by serving through the Washington Conference as an Adviser to the Polish Embassy on Far Eastern affairs, and by preparing almost immediately afterwards in connection with the Conference at Genoa, a well-known French pamphlet, "L'Asie, L'Europe et les Soviets," published in Paris.

At present, he holds a professorship in two institutions at Warsaw, the Military Academy of the Polish General Staff and the Commercial Academy, and by his prolific and versatile pen is assuming a leading place among Polish writers.

There is a sad coincidence so intimately associated with

the making of this book that I have asked the permission of Dr. Ossendowski to be allowed to incorporate a mention of it in this introductory note. It is, that the two people who had the greatest influence in the living of some of its narratives and in the preservation of the records which made the detailed writing of them at the present time possible, have both died since the manuscript was completed in the original Polish text. They were Dr. Ossendowski's mother and Professor Zaleski, who passed away on May 6 and July 11, 1923, respectively. It was with Professor Zaleski that two of the exploring expeditions described in this volume were undertaken; and it was Dr. Os ndowski's mother who, when she escaped from Bolshevik Russia in 1920, brought out with her as actually the only things which she saved from all their possessions, the notes of her son's Asiatic expeditions and copies of five of his works in Russian, in which he had published some of the narratives embodied here.

Between these two persons so intimately connected with the writer's life, there was also another incident that merits record for those who may have read the story of Dr. Ossendowski's escape in his *Beasts, Men and Gods.* It happened that in a forest near a town on the Yenesei the clothing and mangled skeleton were found of a man who had been devoured by wolves. In the pocket of the coat, which the wolves had torn to pieces but not destroyed, there was discovered by Bolshevik partisans the passport of Dr. Ossendowski. As he was so well known and so badly wanted by the Bolshevik rulers of this Siberian town, great rejoicing followed the discovery of his documents and the news of the death of this well-known enemy of Bolshevism was spread through all the

Red Organs in Siberia and Russia. Professor Zaleski when he escaped brought out this news to Dr. Ossendowski's mother and in June of 1921 she had a memorial Mass and service celebrated for him in the church at Warsaw. It stands as a beautiful tribute to her truly motherly confidence in him that, in spite of her ordering of, and participation in, this service to his memory, she continued in her heart to believe that he was still alive and would one day return to her.

It remains only to explain how his passport came to be found in the pocket of the torn coat to justify her faith. In a struggle with a party of Bolsheviks in a forest Dr. Ossendowski, in defense of his own life, made a Commissar pay the price the latter would have exacted from this fugitive man of education and, being in need of documents more useful and less compromising than those in his own name, simply removed the Commissar's papers from his pocket and left his own undesirable ones in their place.

LEWIS STANTON PALEN

LE BOUVERET,
Switzerland,
August 17, 1923.

PREFACE

We Poles are historically united with Siberia and Asia. As far back as the thirteenth century we held the line of Western civilization against the onsweeping Yellow Horde under Jenghiz-Khan, and many of our countrymen who were captured in the battles with them were carried to the shores of the Pacific and the summits of Kwen-lun.

Later, after the partition of Poland, the Russian Tsars banished multitudes of Poles to Siberia, dooming them to suffering and death. Half of Asia knew our martyrs, who in their clanking chains toiled along the endless Siberian road from the Urals to the river Lena to unavoidable death; and all this only because as individuals they would not bow to the conqueror from the north but defended their country courageously and faithfully.

During the last fifty years of the Tsar's régime, Polish employees, doctors, scholars, and soldiers were by choice sent to Siberia, in the Russian Government's effort to keep its Polish subjects as far as possible from their own country.

At the inauguration of the Siberian Club in Petrograd I remember one of the guests, a Pole, saying with ready wit:

"We Poles have two countries: one is Poland; the other, Siberia."

My own life has also been in a great measure connected with Siberia. For about ten years I passed most of my time there, studying coal, salt, gold, or petroleum veins, or making scientific expeditions to investigate the numerous mineral and healing springs, some of which were exceptionally strong and efficacious.

It is significant and characteristic that, wandering over all Siberia, from the Urals to the Pacific and from the Indian frontier to the Arctic regions, I frequently met other Polish explorers, such as Professors Stanislaw Zaleski, Leonard Jaczewski, Charles Bohdanowicz, J. Raczkowski, Engineers Batzevitch, Rozycki, and others. These unexpected meetings, somewhere on the deserted shores of Kulunda Lake, on the Altai prairies, or among the rocks on the shores of the Okhotsk Sea seemed strange. But such are the decrees of Fate, that Polish trails are to cross in every quarter of the globe. It is only now that we again have our own country toward which we all tend, bringing back to it the material and spiritual riches we may have gained.

During the most varied adventures extending over a period of many years, I gathered a store of deep impressions and remembrances, some of which I have attempted to set down in this narrative. Purely scientific descriptions of these travels appeared at different times in certain scientific magazines or in separate books; but they were all published in Russian, as I made these expeditions under the orders of the Russian Government or for scientific or industrial Russian institutions.

FERDINAND OSSENDOWSKI

WARSAW, POLAND
June 15, 1923.

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Part I

THE LAND OF VANISHED NOMADS

MAN AND MYSTERY IN ASIA

Part I

THE LAND OF VANISHED NOMADS

CHAPTER I

THE BITTER LAKE

THE giant of the Yenesei has always exercised a dominating and irrevocable sway in the realm of my imagination. In another volume I related how I saw this immense greenish and dark-blue stream of cold pure water coming from under the snow mantling the summits of Sayan, Aradan, Ulan-Taiga, and Tannu-Ola rise in the might of its resistless power and break the massive fetters of ice with which winter had sought to entomb it; how I felt the beauty and terror of it all; and how finally I was sickened and driven away by the incredible burden of human suffering and sadness which it carried northward as its first plunder of the year for the coffers of its master, the sea.

When I saw this in 1920, at the beginning of my flight from Soviet Siberia through Urianhai, Mongolia, part of Thibet and China to Peking, my heart began to burn in my breast with the flames of hate, and words of damnation rose constantly to my lips. Culture, civilization, Christianity, the twentieth century—and here on the Yenesei an anachronism of horror as far away from all these as its waters are from those of the Amazon.

But my first and much earlier meeting with the Yenesei was quite different. It was at the time when this terrible life full of political storms had not yet whitened my hair; when I was young and had an unquestioning faith in the progress of humanity, in the power not only of technical science but of the spirit of morality as well.

This was in 1899, the year I was to take my degree at the University of Petrograd; but in February of that year the students made a demonstration against the measures of the Russian Government and, as a protest against the severity of the methods of repression used by the police, absented themselves from examinations, nobody appearing at the University. Just at this time a well-known scientist, chemist, and geologist, Professor Stanislaw Zaleski, was being sent by the Government to study the salt and other mineral lakes of the Chulyma-Minusinsk prairies. When he offered me the post of assistant, I accepted willingly and left Petrograd for my first trip into Siberia.

We reached Krasnoyarsk by railroad and from there traveled south along the Yenesei in a little steamer to the headland of Bateni where we landed and continued our journey in small wagons, called *piestierki,* drawn by three sturdy prairie horses. Near this promontory the shores

of the Yenesei are low prairies rising gradually to the west to become finally the foothills and cliffs of Kizill-Kaya, formed of layers of red Devon freestone or shale.

The enormous rock Bateni rises abruptly from out of the Yenesei, beneath whose surface its face carries down to a profound depth. It is a rock of from fifty to sixty feet high, composed of dark shale and covered with thick bushes and birches. A narrow trail winds from the landing to the summit of the rock and from this point one has a wonderful view. Prairies covered with high, nutritious grass stretch away to the west, and afford wide grazing grounds for herds of Tartar horses and sheep. Farther beyond, the sharp outlines of the moderately high cliffs of Kizill-Kaya are discernible on the horizon. Dark *yurtas* of the nomad camps of the Abakan or Black Tartars and the shepherds' fires are visible here and there on the prairie. The broad ribbon of the Yenesei, with islands dotted upon it, unrolls to the east, while across the river one sees the right bank with its cultivated fields and villages of Russian colonists, who, under the ægis and help of the Russian Government, took these wide and fertile stretches from their former Tartar owners who were driven to the left shore, where they continue to this day their nomad life. On the summit of the rock Bateni which raises itself above the river like an enormous column, Tartar pilgrims from afar are always to be met. One can see here Mongols from the Altai or from the country of the Seven Rivers in northern Turkestan and even natives from Pamir.

This solitary rock has its story. When Batyi-Khan with his hordes traversed the prairies of Chulyma, he captured the natives to make soldiers of them and took their

horses and cattle. One of the Tartar princes, Aziuk, in attempting to stop these depredations, formed a big detachment of Tartars from the different tribes, attacked the rear-guard of Batyi-Khan and recaptured the plundered horses and cattle.

The incensed Khan sent against the rebel his palatin Houbilai, who dispersed the detachment of Aziuk and after some further fighting pursued the leader himself and a small band of followers to the summit of Bateni. Here they resisted for a long time, but finally worn down by hunger, they leaped into the Yenesei rather than surrender and perished in the swift current of the mad stream. After the death of Aziuk, nobody dared to offer opposition against the depredations of the victorious Mongols. The Tartars remember gratefully the name of Aziuk, regarding him in the light of a *muclin* or saint. The visiting pilgrims are most numerous in July and from the Bateni Tartars throw in the river food, knives, and even rifles as offerings to the courageous though unhappy prince.

The prairie near Bateni is quite deserted as the Tartars avoid this section in fear of the contact with Russian officials, who usually exact heavy tribute from them, as well as in fear of meetings with the colonists from the opposite shore, whom they naturally hate as the usurpers of their lands. A large and well-kept road leads through this part of the prairies of Chulyma connecting the railway station Atchinsk with the town Minusinsk four hundred twenty miles away and situated near the point where the river Abakan flows into the Yenesei.

The prairies are covered with high, thick grass excellent for cattle. Here and there glitter in the sun, like enor-

mous sheets of looking glass, salt and fresh-water lakes. These, when salt, are bordered by a broad band of black oozé or marsh and give off the disagreeable odors of hydrogen-sulphide or of decaying weeds, bacilli, and larger forms of living beings. The lakes of fresh water are surrounded by bulrushes and reeds. Whenever we chanced to come near one of these lakes, we were always struck by the quantity of aquatic birds living there. Numerous varieties of wild geese and duck, gulls, herons, and even swan, flamingoes and pelicans started up in large flocks and remained for a long time in the air uttering piercing cries until they settled again on the surface of the lake or disappeared among the thick reeds.

I had with me at this time a small Lepage 16-gauge shotgun. It was an old and far from powerful weapon, but even so I managed to make havoc among these birds and enriched our collection with specimens of a Chinese heron and an Indian flamingo.

We found plenty of game birds not only on the lakes alone but in the thick grass of the prairies, where nestled heath-cock, *Tetrao-gallus campestris Amman,* called in Tartar *strepat,* which name has also passed into the Russian language. Riding through the prairie I saw very often big gray birds rising from their coverts. These after a short flight would disappear again in the grass and among the scattered bushes of the Alpine rhododendrons, *Rhododendron flavus,* common here. It was not difficult to hunt these birds, as they allowed us to come near and as their flight was slow and usually in a direct line, which made an easy target.

The big lake Szira-Kul, which signifies "bitter lake," is situated between Bateni and the mountain range of Kizill-

Kaya, quite near the latter's slopes. The lake is an oval about seven miles long and three miles wide and lies in an unforested valley. At its north end, reeds grow round the mouth of the small stream of fresh water which flows into it at this point. The lake is a reservoir of mineral, bitter, saltish water good for healing baths and efficacious in stomach diseases. A village with a small medical and bathing installation is situated on the eastern shore.

The day after our arrival, we started at once to work. We found a small, very light boat, which we loaded with our several instruments: an apparatus for measuring the depth and for taking samples from the bottom; an apparatus for measuring the temperature at different depths; and an apparatus for certain chemical studies.

When we were about to start, whole crowds of Tartars who were living in the village or camping near the lake attentively and with forebodings watched us, doubtfully shaking their heads.

"It bodes no good," they murmured in awe-stricken voices. "The lake is holy and will avenge itself on these foolhardy men."

We were astonished to hear them call the lake holy, as the Tartars are Mussulmans and the followers of Islam do not usually have such traditions. They told us that for centuries Szira-Kul has been regarded as a holy lake and that this belief remains as a legacy of the tribes which formerly camped here but have now disappeared without leaving any traces.

However, it looked as if the foreboding prophecy about the revenge of the lake was to come to naught, as our work on the Szira continued quite successfully. And it was a curious task. Our measurements of the depths

proved that the lake is funnel shaped, with its deepest part near the south shore, which is very abrupt. Near it we found a depth of 3,200 feet. But this place was of a diameter of no more than fifty feet, while outside this spot the depth was no greater than one hundred to one hundred twenty feet. But imagine our astonishment when, some weeks later, in making new measurements we did not find this place which we had very accurately delimited. However, 1,100 yards to the north, we found an abyss of 3,160 feet. We inferred that the bottom of Szira is movable, subject to some erratic and powerful changes, probably produced by deep, tectonic forces.

Taking from the bottom of the lake samples of ooze, black and cold, with a temperature never exceeding 34.6 degrees and always smelling of hydrogen-sulphide, we remarked a strange phenomenon. After an exposure of some time in the open air long, movable grasses of pale-yellow color grew from this ooze, only to disappear soon without leaving any traces. It looked as though some being living in the ooze extended its feelers and then withdrew them. And really this was exactly what happened, as these were colonies of *Beggiatoae* bacilli, these precursors of the death of sea and lakes which appear when some of the salts are decomposing and forming the hydrogen-sulphide which kills all life in these reservoirs.

Continuing our studies, we found at a certain distance below the surface an immense network formed of a great number of these colonies twined together which raised up from the bottom gradually higher and higher, killing all symptoms of life. The lake was therefore quite dead, except that portion above the network wherein there still lived some diminutive crawfish, called *hammarus,* similar

to ordinary shrimps but very small, being no more than one centimeter in length but as quick and bold as their sea relatives. However, the time will come, when the quantity of hydrogen-sulphide created by the *Beggiatoae* will also kill these last representatives of the former fauna of the lake and the process of dying in the lake will be ended, as the bacilli themselves will in turn be poisoned by their own pernicious gas.

Later on I studied with Professor Werigo the limanes near Odessa and some regions of the Black Sea. The identical process of dying was taking place here, and after a longer or shorter period it will also even completely destroy the life of the Black Sea. The fish, sensing this process, are gradually leaving this sea, because they find in its depths these poisoned layers of water which are gradually rising toward the surface.

This is the sad and gruesome process of the death of great water basins, which are metamorphosed into lifeless reservoirs of salt water smelling of hydrogen-sulphide. The Dead Sea in Palestine has long since been such a reservoir, and great numbers of similar ones are scattered over the immense plains of Asia.

The *hammarus* is a very curious animal. Thousands of these crawfish swim near the surface of Lake Szira and viciously attack bathers, ramming them with their hard shell heads and then vanishing immediately. When we threw into the water bits of bread or pieces of cork, we saw swarms of these little creatures surround them, turn them in all directions and quickly devour them.

During our excursions on the lake we often landed on the north bank, where the little stream of fresh water

flowed in and where the bulrushes and reeds grew. We were attracted there by big, black ducks, called *tourpan* or sea-raven. Of course, they were living on some other lake, but evidently had some reason for coming here. As the bitter, saltish water of Szira is excellent in stomach diseases, perhaps the *tourpan* came here to take the cure. We killed some of them, but we regretted it as their flesh was tough and fishy.

Once when we were seated on the bank of this stream having tea, we heard a slight noise and, looking round, perceived a head in the grass which instantly disappeared again. We went in the direction and found a small, nice-looking Tartar girl hiding there who, when we approached, began to weep. We could not quiet her for a long time. Finally, she subsided and came along with us to the fire. Here, drinking tea and nibbling sugar, she told us a sad story, typical, alas, of all Asia with the exception of Mongolia. Although she was only fourteen years old, her parents had already given her in marriage to a rich but rather old Tartar, possessing six other wives besides her. As her family was poor and not influential, the other wives were disdainful and cruel to her. They beat her often, pulled out her hair, and pinched and scratched her comely, young face. She sobbed loudly as she told us of her unhappy state.

"Why did you come here?" we asked.

"I left the camp of my husband never to return to it," was her reply.

"And what are you going to do now?"

"I came here to drown myself in Szira!" she exclaimed in passionate despair. "An ill-treated woman is forgiven

and favored of Allah when she drowns herself in this lake. Heaps of the bones of such martyrs as I are to be found in its depths."

We were then young and impressionable and looked with greatly altered feelings upon the sluggish, salt waves of Szira which, in its strange vaults, concealed the bones of these defenseless, ill-treated women who sought in its calm, oblivion and eternal peace. We had not, however, much time for reflection as some riders suddenly arrived who eyed us very suspiciously and then ordered the young woman to mount a horse they had brought and return to her husband. All in tears, the Tartar woman complied with the command from her master and mounted. One of the Tartars lashed her steed so fiercely that it quivered and the whole caravan started at full speed, soon vanishing before our eyes in the prairie.

For a long time we could not shake ourselves clear of the picture, and for weeks afterward, when swimming in the lake, we involuntarily looked about with the fear of finding the body of the poor little Tartar woman. But we never saw her again and never knew whether her fate brightened or remained as before, full of sadness, persecution, insults, and torture.

Meanwhile, the lake had prepared its revenge for us. One day when we were working in our boat some sixty feet from the south bank, we suddenly felt the boat rocking violently. We looked around us. Big heavy waves coming from the rocks along the bank were running northwest. It was a strange phenomenon, as the sky was without a cloud and no wind was perceptible. However, the lake was stirred up and waves came and went from shore to shore, mounting higher and higher, rudely

buffeting our light boat and covering us with heavy spray that half filled it. Our craft several times went over so far that it began to ship quantities of water.

"It looks bad," said my companion. "It is impossible to work now. We must return to shore."

I acquiesced, but Szira thought differently. In spite of both of us being strong, trained rowers and in spite of all our efforts, we could not make the land. The heavy waves of this dense salt water drove us farther and farther toward the middle of the lake. They overtook us one after another, half submerging the boat. We sat already knee deep in the water, our arms tired with pulling, and, although we strained to the utmost, we realized that our work was vain as the waves were driving us away from the shore.

We decided then to abandon ourselves to the mercy of Szira, figuring that the waves would bring us to the south bank and turned all our attention to the task of bailing and keeping afloat. To be ready for any emergency we put on life belts and took turns at bailing furiously with our only can. Several times a big wave combed the boat and almost carried us overboard.

Our plight attracted the attention of the villagers. Some men immediately launched a big boat lying idle on the shore for the benefit of the bathers; but having only one pair of oars, they made slow progress in our direction. Soon a broken oar compelled them to return to the village, which they did with the greatest difficulty. Meanwhile, the waves carried us to the opposite shore. The red cliffs of Kizill-Kaya were more distinct each moment, and soon the low bank, covered with rhododendrons, osiers, and the tall, pointed leaves of the flag, was in view. Fortunately,

the waves began to diminish. We took up our oars again and quickly reached the shore.

Until now we had never been under Kizill-Kaya. These mountains had attracted us for a long time by their bright red color and their thick undergrowth covering the cliffs and deep ravines. We hoped to meet here bigger game than in the boundless, monotone prairies on the other side of Szira. We were not disappointed, but we met here, as we shall see later on, a type of game quite unexpected by us.

CHAPTER II

FLYING JAILBIRDS

WE pulled our boat up on the shore and, having rested a while after our tiring struggle with the waves of the revengeful Szira, started in the direction of Kizill-Kaya, which began to rise in the form of a recessed red wall right from the shores, gradually mounting higher and higher. We forced our way through the low but very thick reeds and bushes of the bank and slope. As we penetrated the undergrowth, partridges everywhere rose with the noisy whir of their wings and with piercing cries. As we had no guns, the birds escaped safely, not, however, without leaving victims.

One of the birds had started from almost under my feet and concealed itself in the nearby bushes, scolding furiously. Understanding that the nest was near, we began to search about and soon found it some steps farther on among the flag. Twelve little gray beings with reddish spots on the back and sides nestled here, huddled together and following attentively our every movement with their bright, black eyes. They were the young of the stone, rock, or red partridge (*Perdrix rubra*), usually found in elevated dry regions.

As soon as we approached, they scattered in all directions like dry leaves before the wind. However, we saw that on reaching the grass they tried to conceal them-

selves by squatting close to the ground. We began the chase and soon captured the whole brood, taking them to the boat and putting them into an empty kerosene tin on a nest of dry grass. We wanted to let them loose among the chickens in our yard to see if they would accustom themselves to domestic conditions under the hen with her chickens.

The results of our experiment were instructive if not profitable. The partridges readily followed the hen, obediently concealing themselves, together with the chickens under her wings, and very energetically and successfully struggled for food with the chicks larger than themselves. They were quicker, stronger, and more courageous than their domestic cousins; and what astonished us more was the fact that when one little partridge got into a fight, all the others immediately came to the rescue. Some days passed during which we saw the whole family of the hen living peacefully in the yard, which was surrounded with a high board fence, playing, battling, looking for food, and in general making as much noise as they could.

Suddenly, after two weeks, two partridges disappeared leaving no traces. The second day three more were missing. We made careful investigations but found neither living nor dead partridges. As none of the chickens were missing, we could not infer that the partridges had fallen prey to a four-footed or winged plunderer. Then two more disappeared. As it was Sunday and we had leisure for such things we began to watch. Soon we remarked two of the birds running to the fence, where they began with great energy to scratch a hole in the sand between two boards through which they squeezed

their way to freedom. During the following days the rest of them deserted their foster mother and the hospitable yard in the same manner, leaving the hen alone with her brood. One of the old Siberian hunters to whom I related the story of these birds observed:

"It is impossible to domesticate partridges or heathcock. They live in captivity, always thinking about liberty. One puff of wind from the forest or prairie, one cry of the free birds, and immediately they will find means of escape, even if it involves the peril of death. Liberty, Sir, is a grand thing, and only man cannot understand it."

Meanwhile, after securing our small prisoners in the boat, we began to mount the slopes of Kizill-Kaya. The massif of this mountain is formed of hard, red Devon freestone, in some places broken by veins of hardened clay. In the middle of the range we came upon large terraces with distinct traces of waves on the surface of the veins while the deep clefts and holes in the faces of these terraces bore evidence to the fact that the waters of a great reservoir once beat against these walls. As the surface of the Chulyma-Minusinsk prairie formed once in a former geologic epoch the bottom of the Mid-Asiatic Sea, which left behind itself numerous mineral salt lakes from the Urals to the great Khingan and Kwen-lun, it is clearly evident that centuries ago the receding sea had here for a time its western shore. This is also established by the presence of numerous fossil shells, especially belemnites, strewn about in great quantities. In a word, from the dying Szira to Kizill-Kaya, we saw the vast grave in which Nature had buried an immense sea.

The pointed summits of the range had been fashioned

by wind, rain, and frost which had destroyed the hard freestone, converting it into the dust and sand which have covered more and more the traces of the sea and of epochs long since gone. We found upon the summit deep clefts and caverns made by the scouring sand from the Gobi brought here by the autumn winds. Some of them were quite large.

Nearing one of them, we were astonished to see a thin column of smoke issuing from it. We were watching it with curiosity, when we saw three peasants emerge, barefooted and in dilapidated dress. They began to run away in the direction of the western slope and when near the summit, one of them turned and shot at us.

The distance was too far for accurate shooting; besides, as the weapon used was a revolver, the bullet probably could not even reach us. I had known Siberia long and had already had several such adventures; consequently, I knew well with whom I had to deal. Undoubtedly, these were escaping convicts from some Russian prison, perhaps even from Sakhalin, where the Russian tribunals send the worst cases. Therefore, I at once shouted to them that we were neither police nor officials and that we had no desire to trouble them.

They returned and approached us, but with hesitation, diffidence, and great caution. However, they took off their caps and were very respectful, though their eyes wandered over us looking for arms or some evidence of official character. Finally, when we told them that we were conducting scientific studies of the lake and related our experiences of the day, they calmed down and very hospitably invited us to their den.

It was a rather large and deep cavern in the rock;

big boulders which had rolled from the summit of the range concealed the entrance. Our new acquaintances had here very convenient accommodations. In the most remote corner was a soft bed of dry grass. Stones formed a hearth where, over the fire, tea boiled in a blackened kettle, while bags with dried black bread and tea were concealed in the crevices of the wall. In one corner we espied sacks and axes, these necessary attributes of the Siberian tramp who has escaped from prison or from some place of banishment and wanders over the northern tundra, across mountains, and through the virgin forest or *taiga* and finally crosses the Urals in winter and summer alike, through rain, heat, or the most gripping cold, in his attempts to get back into Europe. The runaway tramp carries in his sack his whole fortune, very modest but well chosen. With his axe he cuts his firewood and, in case of need, uses it as a weapon in hunting or in fighting the police and patrolling Cossacks. The Siberian tramp is a great expert in the use of his axe, which he can whiz through the air at incredible speed and land in the skull of a bear or of a man, who may happen to menace the fugitive in his forest hiding place.

Our new friends had already traveled in this dangerous and tiring manner two years. They were interesting characters. One of them called Hak had escaped in winter over the ice from Sakhalin by crossing the Tartar Passage which separates this island from the mainland. As was to be expected, Hak was hotly pursued as he was a notorious criminal and on one occasion had killed about fifteen people in an attack on a post-office. In his sack he carried a special winter disguise which consisted

of a large mantle of white linen. The moment that he discovered anyone far away in pursuit, he immediately lay down on the snow and covered himself and his belongings with the white mantle, making himself one with the dead white wilderness, above which whistled the northern wind from the Okhotsk Sea carrying clouds of snow and sleet that soon drifted him in.

The second one of the fugitives, answering to the name of Sienko, was an incendiary and had escaped from prison on the Amur, traversing the whole of Siberia bound for some place near Moscow with the sole purpose of despatching the witnesses whose testimony had established his guilt before the tribunal. Just the reverse of Hak who was polite and sociable and always joking gaily but carefully avoiding the eye of a stranger, Sienko was gloomy and silent and his eyes, laden with their expression of hate, seemed to rivet themselves to the eyes of other men.

The third inhabitant of the cavern on Kizill-Kaya, Trufanoff, was the most curious type of the three. A little, thin man, with long grizzled hair and piercing, black roving eyes, he was always in motion; seated one moment, on his feet the next, always speaking volubly and never paying attention to the conversation of his fellow-travelers. He continually entered and quitted the cavern, giving the impression of a dog anxiously sniffing about. He told nothing about himself and when asked why he had been imprisoned and from where he had escaped, he simply answered:

"From the prison, where I was put unjustly"—and immediately crept silently from the cavern.

"Poor man!" grunted his companions.

Some days later I learned from Hak that Trufanoff had been put in prison for a small theft when only a young man. A terrible longing for his family made him try to escape, for which attempt his confinement was prolonged and he was sent to Siberia. After some years, he escaped from his Siberian jail and in the fight when captured, killed one of the gaolers. For this he was sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor, but escaped from the prison several times. When I met him he was a fugitive for the tenth time.

Our contact with the fugitives led them to ask us to take them as helpers in our work on the lake, and to obtain for them from the single policeman in the village, permission to live there. Of course, they begged us not to enlighten the authorities about their criminal past, but to say only that they were men who had lost their documents. The squareness of the fugitives toward private individuals is a well recognized fact in Siberia. Every fugitive is quite frank with non-official persons because in Siberia, all the peasants and ordinary citizens give aid to these refugees from the law, concealing them from the police and putting food out on the thresholds for those of these tramps who wander about at night not wishing to show themselves where the representatives of authority are to be met.

Why are the Siberians so kindly disposed toward the fugitives? There are two reasons. One, a practical one, is the wish to make a friend of the wild and often dangerous brutal tramp, tracked and hunted like a beast of prey; the second, a moral one, is that the Siberians have always known that the Tsars' tribunals very often exiled those condemned for their political opinions and

other really innocent persons to Siberia, from where, forgotten by tribunals and authorities, they either had to escape or face death or madness.

Owing to these facts, we learned the histories of Hak, Sienko, and Trufanoff and, as we wanted workers, we promised them our protection. Their request was really granted owing to the recognized standing and influence of Professor Zaleski.

In the evening of our adventure, the waves quieted down and the surface of the lake became like a looking glass. Taking leave of our unique new acquaintances we returned to the village where we were anxiously and impatiently awaited.

The Professor forbade us going on the lake in future in the light boat, directing that we substitute for it the big boat in which the villagers had tried unsuccessfully to rescue us. This boat had two pairs of oars and a rudder so that three men were needed. We took advantage of this condition to urge the fugitives' case and already the next day, Hak, Sienko, and Trufanoff were plying the oars as we made our soundings, took samples of water and ooze, and caught specimens of the *hammarus* which we preserved in jars of formalin solution.

We heard from our workers long, gruesome tales about the life, fate, and tragedy of the inhabitants of the Siberian prisons; but it was Trufanoff who one evening spread before us the most terrible page of these stories.

"All this is nothing," he exclaimed, when Sienko had concluded a terrible tale of the adventures of some fugitives. "I will tell you what once happened to me and what made of me the wretch that I am, gray of hair and far from sound of mind.

"Five of us decided to escape from Akatoui. We communicated with acquaintances in the country near our prison town and received their promise to prepare us bags, axes, and kettles. But a terrible misfortune befell us. When we had sawn our way out through the bars of the prison windows, and scaling the walls, had come to the village where our friends lived, we learned that they had been arrested and put in prison. We therefore were without the articles needed for the flight and the life of the road, and were obliged to conceal ourselves as best we could in the forest nearby since the police would very easily discover our presence in the village. Though we understood full well the madness of our undertaking, we began our journey without our equipment. As it was already late autumn, we suffered from cold and hunger, and diseases soon began to plague us.

"Finally, after several months of torture, we became quite weak from hunger and faced squarely the fact that only death awaited us. With our track lying through an unpeopled forest we could expect help from nowhere. Naturally, we could not travel the big road, as we knew that there the authorities would surely catch us; and therefore, cold and hungry, we doggedly tramped on through the timber. Finally, one evening one of our party sank down and did not rise again. When we woke in the morning from the half-sleep, half- numbness which was the only repose we knew, we saw that he was dead.

"I remember that morning as though it were yesterday. A terrible and disgusting thought crossed my mind only to disappear immediately. 'The man is dead; he feels nothing, he can do and wants to do nothing—and the same fate awaits us. Meanwhile, he can save us. One

must simply have the courage to eat human flesh, the flesh of this man who yesterday spoke with us, suffered with us, treasured in his soul a spark of hope. Just given this courage and decision and everything will improve for a time; and afterwards it will be . . . what the Lord shall decide. Something can come to save us! . . .'

"The thought returned again soon, recurring more insistently every time, becoming tiring and stubborn. I read this same thought in the looks of my companions. . . .

"We fought with it and with our hunger for some days, and finally, without speaking about it and without prearranged understanding, we dug out from the snow the body of our companion and divided it between us as we would an ox or a sheep. From this moment our hunger left us, but we could not look at one another any more and tramped forward in a gloomy silence. We felt no qualms of conscience, no sorrow; we had no heavy thoughts, only a glum indifference and ill will to mankind and to ourselves."

Trufanoff broke off his narrative and for a long time smoked in silence a cigarette made of a bit of old newspaper. Having finished it, and thrown the stump in the lake, he continued:

"The Siberian winter is long, damn it, very long, and it is a cruel step-mother! . . . Again we wanted food, and were so weak we could not go forward as the snow was deep and tiring; again the cold and the hunger froze the blood in our veins, lighting green and red fires in our eyes. . . . Our hearts thumped as a hammer for one moment, to fall afterwards into an abyss without sound or motion. . . . And the mind, already poisoned, worked and something whispered to each of us separately:

" 'Be strong and wait.'

"The old Tartar Yousouf and I—we outlived the rest. Two of our companions died the same day and things went easy then. One was stouter and rather big; the second one, small and thin. We cast lots and the bigger fell to my share. Again we lived and continued in strength until the spring, when we could recommence our interrupted journey.

"I had still a reserve when Yousouf approached me one day and said:

" 'Divide with me, I am hungry.'

" 'I will not divide, because then tomorrow I shall be hungry also,' I answered.

"He went away without a word and I decided to use my supply sparingly and make it last till the moment . . . when Yousouf . . .

"But that same night I made the discovery that my hopes could be ruined. Before the dawn a slight noise awoke me. I opened my eyes with some difficulty and then suddenly jumped to my feet, for I saw Yousouf coming toward me swinging a heavy stone fastened in one end of his belt.

"I understood at once that he had intended to smash my skull during my sleep with this terrible weapon called by us tramps, in the jargon of the ancient brigands, *kisten*. Yousouf had not noticed at first that I was awake and ready for defense, and better armed as I possessed a knife. Now he howled from despair and slunk away.

"From this moment the most horrible torture began. Yousouf hunted me continually, stealing near me at nights, concealing himself in bushes or behind rocks. He tried to throw at me big, heavy stones and when I

descended the mountain slopes rolled down at me huge rocks and parts of boulders. I never had a moment of calm or peace. My mind was in a turmoil; my blood boiled in rage and my teeth chattered. Finally, I made a decision, a bloody, irrevocable, and desperate one.

"In the morning I finished my food to gain strength and, with a bone in my hand, I turned back on the Tartar who was following me at a distance. On seeing the bone, he made at me with a howl of mad joy and I noticed that he let fall the heavy, gnarled cudgel he always carried as a weapon against me. When he came near, I snatched my knife from my sleeve and gave a thrust at this horrible specter which had tortured me these many days. I had a cruel joy in feeling the blade pierce something soft followed by a hot stream on my hand. My aim had been good, for he did not utter a sound. A quiver ran from head to foot—then all was still. . . .

"My ghastly act had preserved me and enabled me to continue but since that damned morning the shadow of Yousouf has never left me. I cannot sleep, for fear that he will spring on me and throttle me; when I am in a house or a cavern, I must continually go outside to make sure that the Tartar is not tracking me. When in the forest I expect him to drop on me from the limbs of a pine tree; on the prairie I look for his shadow in the grass and behind the stones. My hair became gray, I lost my mind, and nothing can help me. Yousouf takes his revenge terribly and cruelly. I devoured him entirely, now he devours bit by bit my soul and mind, as a worm devours an apple. . . .

"Only vodka helps me a little, because it brings obliv-

ion. Have you not some vodka, gentlemen, for poor Trufanoff who has laid bare his soul before you?" . . .

We were silent, profoundly moved, and awed by this gruesome tale of confession; but the others began to talk and, inspired by the sincerity of the cannibal, told us more terrible and awful stories of the adventures of escaped prisoners and tramps who employ such means and energy to save life, this life which has no value on the social market in Russia, where the Government with such ill-considered cruelty changes men of the twentieth century into wild beasts, forcing them into cannibalism and to horrible crimes and creating hordes of vicious malcóntents who have taken their revenge during the bloody days of Bolshevism.

Hak and Sienko were experienced criminals who, after the tortures and persecutions undergone in prison, were sworn enemies of society. They had already escaped from jail several times and were known everywhere as "birds" or "vagrants," which in prison jargon signifies habitués who cannot reconcile themselves to the monotonous life of the convicts. The prison administration, for whom such "birds" were a source of much trouble and care, always dealt with them in a cruel manner. Every soldier was authorized to kill fugitives during their pursuit and received a money reward for each one taken or slain. A whole caste of Cossacks existed in Siberia, especially among the Yakut Cossacks, who regarded as their distinct profession the pursuit of escaped convicts. They arrested them or simply killed them, earning in this way their ten roubles per head.

A recaptured prisoner was marked for all time by the administration. Hak showed us these stigmas, these terri-

fying marks on his body. They consisted of circles and triangles burned with hot irons on his breast and shoulders and some were so deeply burned that one could see the barely covered ribs. Sienko had other marks, his nostrils were slit and his ear was notched. Every Russian citizen meeting men with such marks had the right to kill them whether he did it from a sense of assisting the administration of law or just because he wanted to experience a strong emotion or try out his firearms; for convicts with such marks were regarded by the tribunals as perpetual prisoners and as outside the law.

These men with whom we worked and swam on Lake Szira were just such tragic jetsam of mankind. However, they were very polite, willing, and sensitive. Perhaps this over-sensitiveness and abnormal excitability were the reasons for their violent and bloody actions, and social justice made the mistake, instead of placing them in hospitals and reformatories, of lodging them in prisons and condemning them to *katorga,* penal labor in settlements and mines, which undermined and broke down all ideas of morality.

The best mannered and the easiest to live with was Hak. Always good tempered and willing to work, thankful for each evidence of human sympathy towards him, he was invaluable for the work on the lake. Once a sailor, he knew and loved water and was in his own element when near it, swimming like a fish and perfectly at home in a boat.

When once we had the misfortune to lose our apparatus for measuring depths, Hak knew how to help us. Taking a heavy stone in his hands, he dove to the bottom of the lake, which in this place had a depth of twenty-six

feet, untwisted the line which had caught under a boulder, and brought back the heavy apparatus.

He was also an excellent *tourpan* hunter. It was naturally quite impossible to approach these watchful birds in a boat, as they always flushed far too soon for a shot. But one Sunday Hak brought in several of them for us. When he started out with a linen bag as his only equipment, I had curiosity and confidence enough to follow him. On the northern bank of the lake at the mouth of the little stream Hak stripped himself bare and, gathering a big bunch of reeds, fastened them around his neck in such way that they masked his head. Then he got me to improve the effect by putting handfuls of grass all over the top of his head and, bag in hand, entered the water. Soon he was beyond his depth and swimming erect or treading water.

Slowly the little bunch of reeds approached a flock which were at first suspicious and drew away from the moving object but, finally accepting it as a floating bunch of plants, paid no more attention to it and went on feeding. Meanwhile the bunch approached one of the *tourpans*, which even had a peck at it, but the following moment gave a squawk and disappeared under the water. The others looked around with astonishment but, seeing no danger, quieted down. Some minutes later a second and a third bird followed the first, after which the bunch of reeds turned toward shore and soon Hak was visible, cutting the water with masterful strokes and swimming quickly in the direction of the reeds. Next moment he was on the bank carrying with him the three birds which he had caught by the feet and put into his bag, where they were drowned.

"We must skin them today as it is warm and the birds will spoil very quickly; and then all your astonishing skill and you efforts will be lost," I exclaimed. "What a pity we have no knife so that we could do it at once."

"A knife?" said Hak. "I can give it to you."

Saying this, he put his hand to his naked hip, and right at the place where the abdomen joins the hip, he lay back a fold of the skin. I saw a little aperture in which Hak put two fingers, taking from it a long, thin knife, protected by a highly polished wooden guard along the edge, and a diminutive file. This habitual criminal had a pocket made in his own skin!

"We old convicts almost always undergo this operation," declared Hak with a significant smile. "It is impossible to avoid it! To escape from prison one must cut the bars, and sometimes the fetters as well. And we have to have weapons in our fights with the gaoler or the soldiers pursuing us. Consequently, we always have this 'pen' or knife, thin and sharp as a razor, with which it is easy to stab a man." . . .

Saying this, Hak began quietly to skin the *tourpans* and did it probably as skilfully as he had murdered men or knifed his gaolers.

CHAPTER III

THE LOST TOWN

THE swimming ability of Hak led to our making a very interesting discovery in the southern part of the lake. One day a valuable thermometer, with which we measured the temperature at various depths, worked loose and went to the bottom. Immediately, Hak undressed and jumped in the water. After several deep dives he returned to the boat pale and frightened. We were quite astonished, as we thought nothing in the world could scare Hak. However, he was thoroughly frightened and stammered something incomprehensible with trembling lips. Finally, scrambling into the boat he quieted down a little and began to relate his adventure.

"When I went under the water for the last time, a strange darkness surrounded me. I felt the bottom near but could discern nothing. I could not understand the meaning of this. But after a moment my eyes became accustomed to the twilight and I saw that I was between what appeared to be two high rocks. However, when I came closer I noticed a hole in them which was quite square! I saw at once that it was a door or a window and that these stones were parts of walls. Through the window I made out the opposite walls and parts of a tower . . . and afterwards . . ."

Here Hak shuddered and his face became whiter than before.

"What did you see afterwards?" we pressed him.

"I saw a human skeleton. It stood near the wall and balanced itself as if hopping from one foot to the other." . . .

"Are you sure that you have seen all this?"

"As distinctly as I see you," he answered, breathing hard. "I am ready to swear to it on the salvation of my soul."

For a time we came every day to this place, trying to see through the dark, mysterious depth of Szira, but could discover nothing in the dense water of the lake.

But from a Tartar merchant we later learned that a legend existed about Lake Szira to the effect that it appeared in one day. He found for us an old Tartar woman, blind and almost deaf, who after receiving a silver rouble told us the following:

"On the spot now covered by the bitter [1] lake, there was once a town belonging to the Ouiguy Tartars who once reigned over a large part of Central Asia. In the town was a temple in which, under a heavy stone with sacred signs on it, reposed the body of the last of the rulers. The great Jenghiz-Khan came and killed all the men, to wipe the Ouigurs from the surface of the earth. Then the stone on the grave of the Ouigur Khan broke to pieces and the shade of the Khan appeared and cried: 'Mothers, wives, and daughters of the Ouigurs! Weep the bitter tears of hate and damnation, because the last days of your nation have come.' The Ouigur women

[1] In Tartar: Szira-Kul. Quantities fo Glauber and magnesium salts in the lake make the water quite bitter.

complied with this command and the warriors of Jenghiz, who took them as wives expecting gaiety, singing, and dancing from these women as graceful as the reeds, seeing them dissolved in tears and hearing their curses and imprecations, in a fury murdered them all. But the corpses themselves continued to weep, and their tears made such a flood that the valley in which the town was built was filled with bitter water and the town was submerged. Now the waves of Szira-Kul surge above it, Szira-Kul whose surface is sometimes lashed in storm when there in its depths the last master of the once powerful and courageous Ouigurs, poisoned by hate, rages afiew."

This legend has the usual characteristics of the Asiatic legends, but it is undoubtedly more recent than the ruins of the town seen at the bottom of Szira by our courageous Hak.

In the memoirs of the distinguished Russian explorer Martianoff, we find reference to the claim that Tartars have seen on the bottom of Szira the ruins of houses and walls. As I stated before, the valley of Szira is affected by tectonic geological processes and the bottom of the lake is liable to sudden elevations or depressions. It is hence quite possible that some Tartar dwellings, even with a temple and with a part of the shore, had been submerged after one of the upheavals in the bottom of the lake. The Tartars may have seen in the water the remains of the drowned dwellings and then have gradually developed among their story-tellers this legend, because men of Asia love romantic, mysterious tales and look to them for relaxation and repose after the usual cares of the gray everyday life.

"And this human skeleton balancing in the water?" was the question we put one another, and which immediately found an answer as we remembered the sad tale of the comely little Tartar woman of the unhappy women-slaves who come here to the shore of Szira, seeking in its abysses deliverance from the unbearable fetters of life. Had not the waves of Szira possibly brought the body of one of these to the ruins of the submerged town, where with its feet caught in this position it had remained as a skeleton long, long years, here in the depths of the dying lake, where the *Beggiatoae* bacilli struggle with the last forms of life, not knowing that they also are courting death?

All this is to us of the West so comprehensible, so simple, so possible; but in the wilderness and space, the naïveté and superstition of Asia, so mysterious, so romantic, so moving!

CHAPTER IV

AMONG THE FLOWERS

THE eastern bank of Szira possesses a mountainous elevation as well as the western one, where the range of Kizill-Kaya rises. The eastern elevation has the character of a table-land not very high and overgrown with exuberant grass which separates the valley of Szira from the valley of another lake, It-Kul or Sweet Lake. On the highest part of this plateau we found numerous agglomerations of belemnites or fossilized cuttle-fish, and petrified shells, characteristic of these geologic strata among which layers of coal of varying thickness are also often found. They are preponderatingly the so-called "ammonites."

Following the table-land, an immense expanse of prairie stretched away bordered by mountains covered with pine and fir forests, and framing three sides of this lake of It-Kul, which is slightly larger than Szira.

One day we made an excursion to the lake for the purpose of carrying out a reconnaissance, to study the character of this reservoir. The innumerable flowers ornamenting with brilliant patches of color the green background of the prairie elicited our constant admiration and wonder as we traversed these plains between Szira and It-Kul.

Immense specimens of wild, white and yellow lilies

with calices measuring about eight inches, raised themselves high above the grass, filling the air with their sweet, intoxicating aroma. Some steps farther on the so-called night or prairie violets stood motionless like wax candles. This plant has a single stalk covered with from fifty to eighty little white waxy flowers, in form recalling the orchis, and as ferocious as the latter inasmuch as numerous small insects find death in its treacherous calices. These flowers have an aroma exceedingly strong, even intoxicating, which increases in strength after sundown and is most potent at midnight. We found sometimes rather large forest meadows where only one plant of the night violets grew in solitude, but where all the air around was impregnated at night with its very subtle but penetrating aroma. We tried to distil perfume from these flowers and made an extract on almond oil. Ten drops of our extract in half a liter of alcohol sufficed to give a scent very delicate and durable. But a bouquet of these flowers kept in a closed room is a real poison. I had as proof of this a terrible headache which lasted two whole days during which time I suffered from palpitations of the heart and experienced numbness in half of my body. Undoubtedly, the night violet possesses, besides the ethereal oils usual in the flowers, certain poisonous elements: for instance, prussic acid, as its bitter almond scent is sometimes easy to discern.

Another fact bore testimony to the poisonous character of these flowers. As noted above, these seemingly innocent blossoms are ferocious and devour the insects which penetrate into their interior. The nerve which controls the closing apparatus of the flowers is placed very deep in the tiny calyx. The small insect alighting on the

flowers begins to feed on the honey near the edge and could quietly go away, were it not for the fact that the violets distil their poisonous, intoxicating scent, so that the insect loses its presence of mind and its sense of direction and, instead of turning back to the entrance, is always enticed farther downward in its intoxication until it comes in contact with the nerve center. The petals of the violet are immediately closed and the calyx becomes a scented coffin for the greedy insect which gradually is absorbed by the ferocious and revengeful wax-flower. We remarked also that bees, on coming closer, avoided these flowers, however much the aroma first attracted them from afar.

Alpine lilies, red with black spots and stripes, called here *sarana,* nestled in the grass. Their petals are rolled in a spiral directed to the earth and they have no scent. This type of lily is in great demand by the Chinese epicures, though here in the prairie of Chulyma-Minusinsk they are not at all used. The *sarana* possess an oblong, white bulb about the size of a walnut and composed of two parts; it is as farinaceous as a chestnut and has a sweetish taste. The Chinese, who export these plants from Urianhai and from Mongolia, boil this bulb, put on it a sweet sauce of honey and ginger and serve it as a special dainty at the most elegant dinners.

Yellow, white, and purple Japanese iris, with flowers of from eight to twelve inches in length, grown in clusters beautifully detaching themselves from the green carpet of the prairie abound here and have a subtle violet scent, which their roots possess in an even stronger degree. These roots, when dried and pulverized, hold this scent for a number of years and are not only much used in

Asia, but are also the well-known orris root of Western commerce. The women of Asia put little bags, *sui generis* sachet, of this powder in their dresses and sprinkle it in their hair; while the men add it to their snuff-boxes or to the tobacco used for their pipes.

In some more humid ravines we came across blue flowers of a plant of the species *Saponifera,* possessing very sweet stalks and roots. It is a prairie dainty and round the Tartar camps swarms of children search the neighboring country for it.

Several varieties of asparagus grow very well in the neighborhood of It-Kul and, as Engineer E. Rozycki told us, in springtime one can live on asparagus here, some of the varieties being very delicious.

One other noteworthy plant has chosen the basin of the lake for its home. It is of the species *Brassica,* called in China *zebet.* The roots of this plant smell strongly of musk and are known in commerce as "vegetable musk," and a most highly prized scent much used in the houses of rich Chinese is made from them. The Abakan Tartars are familiar with the aromatic properties of the *zebet* and employ it just as they do the orris root.

I have spoken only of the most interesting types of plants in this country of luxuriant vegetable growth, but have said nothing about a whole group of medicinal and poisonous plants which are carefully gathered by the Tartars and especially by the Mussulman physicians, wizards, and sorcerers. They know well the ipecacuanha, valerian, gentian, strychnine, quinine, and belladonna. I had no occasion to prove the abilities of the native physicians, but heard of several dramas in which opium and strychnine played a big part, and after which new stones

appeared on the prairie to mark the last resting place of these sons of the plain lulled to their eternal sleep by the experienced hand of the Tartar sorcerer.

Curious and characteristic of this locality is the *edelweiss,* a sample of the Alpine flora found here in great abundance. This can be explained by the fact that the prairie between Szira and It-Kul is of great elevation and its climate corresponds to that of the upper ranges of the Alps. Everywhere we came across Alpine pastures with an abundant, nourishing grass in which we found these *edelweiss,* big everlasting flowers looking as though they were cut from white velvet.

Lake It-Kul has also an Alpine character. Steep rocks descend directly into it, rocks at the base of which we found great depth, a low temperature, and an unusual clearness of water with thick layers of petrified tree branches which fell long ago from the mountains to the bottom of the lake. All this reminded us of the numerous Alpine lakes in Europe and those of the same type in Urianhai, described by Mr. Douglas Carruthers in his *Unknown Mongolia* and by myself in *Beasts, Men and Gods.*

A vast variety of minerals was also found in the mountains surrounding It-Kul, including deposits of iron, manganese, copper, and coal. In this respect, the geology of this lake is similar to that of Szira where layers of manganese and iron predominate.

We had no boat to explore It-Kul as its shores are quite unpeopled. Sometimes herds of Tartar horses come here to drink, but it is a rare occurrence as water is plentiful in this part of the country. Walking along the shore we remarked at once that the lake was full of fish,

due evidently to the fact that the fresh water of the lake is rich in microscopic flora and fauna, embracing all sorts of weeds, worms, and hydras. We saw constantly large fish breaking the water in pursuit of the smaller fry.

As we were to remain here several days, we sent Sienko back for rods and other equipment needed for fishing, including artificial bait and plenty of lines. That same evening, unmercifully bitten by mosquitoes and voracious flies, we sat angling among the reeds of the northern shore, willing to take our drastic entomological punishment in return for the wonderful piscatorial thrills of lively strikes and bending rods. After some hours, we had about sixty carp and perch, some of them weighing fifteen pounds.

Sienko and Hak, who had been fishermen since childhood and especially during their years of tramping, had attained great ability and ingenuity in the art and, during these first days, took much spoil from the lake, including one enormous pike of about sixty pounds that carried on its back a whole botanical garden of water weeds and other growth in a thick tangle.

One day, when we were tramping around the lake visiting the mountains and rocks near its borders, we unexpectedly came upon the well-known Russianized English hunter, Dr. Peacock, who had followed the chase into many of the out-of-the-way corners of Siberia. He came to our camp and shared with us several successful and thrilling mountain-cock, heath-cock, and deer hunts on the surrounding ridges of beautifully timbered lands with abundant grass and no underbush, reminding me strongly at times of a well-maintained English park.

But it was on the lake that we found most of our

game. Here aquatic birds nested among the reeds: geese and ducks, gulls of different sorts and herons. The young ones were of quite a size, but could not yet fly though it was already the middle of June. Each time we approached the reeds we saw young geese and ducks swarming on the lake, paddling about in every direction, mortally afraid, and always running to covert in the grass and reeds. For a long time we could not put up the old geese and ducks. Peacock told me that hunters in Siberia have often remarked that the ganders and drakes fly away from the females for the whole period used in the raising of the brood. When the little ones begin to fly and become independent enough to leave the mothers, the males return; but there are also exceptions, as some male birds share the burden of rearing the family, searching for food and defending the nest. Old Peacock wanted to hunt these faithful and patient husbands, and confidently expected we should find some. His hopes were realized, for after some wandering among the bushes and thickets we frightened several old ganders; but they were so far away that our shot did them no harm, though we heard them spattering against their powerful wings.

"We must separate," announced Peacock, "for each of us can then have some chance at the birds flushed by the other."

After we parted I found nothing among the thickets of reeds and bulrushes which I first beat; but suddenly I marked in some tall, sharp grass a rather large stretch of sand where several old ganders were proudly strutting. I gave a long whistle to flush them for, since one chagrining lesson from my father before a group of hunters

when I was twelve years old, I have never shot at a sitting bird. In a flash, the ganders began to run, opening their large, powerful wings and taking off almost in a straight line. In response to my shot one of the birds fell heavily but struggled to its feet and made for the reeds, trailing a broken wing. I hastened to intercept it but, as soon as I touched the sand with my feet, I felt myself sinking into it. My hunter's enthusiasm, however, urged me on, but after only a few steps I felt as though the earth were opening under me. There seemed to be no solid ground under my feet and I sank deeper and deeper. Already I was waist down in the shifting sand, and in a moment my cartridge belt was covered. My desperate efforts to get out only carried be down farther and I realized that I had run into a deep quicksand. Turning my head in every direction I began to shout as I could not see Dr. Peacock behind the rushes and grass.

Meanwhile, the sand was sucking me down deeper and deeper and it would have been only a few minutes before it engulfed me and obliterated all traces so that no one could ever even find my body. My hair stood on end at this thought, but my mind under the stimulus of danger began to work at lightning speed. What should I do, how could I save myself, could the doctor hear my shouts for help?

Remembering the stories of men who had been in the same position, I drew to me my gun, which I had dropped during my struggles and, laying it before me on the surface of the bog, leaned on it on my breast in an attempt to make it support my body while I sought to extricate my legs and feet. It proved a difficult task for the gun sank in under my weight and I was obliged

to work it out very carefully and to begin afresh my maneuver. After some further minutes of struggle, I finally lay on the surface stretched to my full length with limbs extended, in which position I could just keep up owing to the extended area covered. With a moment's rest I carefully wormed myself in the direction of the reeds, where finally I was safe from the treacherous bog though covered with the greedy wet sand. Searching out a dry spot in the rays of the hot sun, I took off my clothes and, while waiting for them and my boots to dry, I cleaned my old Lepage, which was full of sand. It was an hour before I could start in search of Peacock who had gone off somewhere far beyond the reach of my shouts. With him so far away, it suddenly came across me that I should surely have been lost if it had not been for my other companion, my faithful Lepage!

The doctor had shot a lot of geese and ducks, while I returned to the camp with an empty bag. But when he heard of my adventure he became grave and said:

"Oh, you have bagged something much more precious than geese and ducks, your assuring realization of your own *sang-froid,* which held you up and made it possible for you to say to yourself: 'I am afraid this is true, but I must think coherently!' "

Though I thoroughly appreciated his compliment, it was supper time before I was entirely normal and quite myself again; but I remember always these spots on the marshes and never trust myself to them. I prefer waddling in water and mud with my feet entangled in the thick, sharp marsh grass rather than stepping on these alluring but treacherous sands.

CHAPTER V

TAMING TARTAR STEEDS

AFTER our return to Szira, we spent some days working over our studies of It-Kul. Then we started with Professor Zaleski to the prairies, whither we had been invited to visit a rich Tartar, Yousouf Spirin, the owner of immense horse studs.

He was a nomad, simple and unlearned, but fabulously rich in the measure of the country. He lived with his family under tents which he moved from place to place throughout the region between the lakes of Szira, It-Kul, and Shunet as the grazing of his herds demanded.

He graciously phrased his invitation to indicate that he would be honored by the visit of learned people.

He sent a good carriage to fetch us, with three big, fine horses. A sturdy, attractive-looking young Tartar, Alim, acted as coachman. When we were in place, he looked about, raised in his seat and uttering a wild cry, lashed the horses with a long plaited leather whip. It felt as though the carriage were torn from under us and we had to hold tight to it to keep from falling out. The horses had started at a full gallop and were tearing across the prairie forced to top speed by the cries of the wild coachman and by the terrible lashings. In one hour we thus covered thirteen miles.

As we approached, we saw several tents of dark gray

saddle-cloth with cattle and sheep grazing on the prairie near-by to be ready for home use, while all the herds were being run on pastures far away behind the range of Kizill-Kaya.

On the horizon we made out square buildings of pine logs surrounded by low walls of clay, the so-called *auls* or houses in which rich Tartars spend the winter months.

Spirin with his elder son Mahmet greeted us before his tent or *yurta,* inviting us with low salutes and benedictions in the name of the Prophet to enter. The interior of the *yurta* was splendid. The ground was covered with a thick layer of soft saddle-cloths, and rich carpets made by the deft hands of the Bokhara and Sardes women were scattered about. Soft silken hangings hid the sides and roof of the *yurta,* and immense silk cushions and mattresses invited one to repose. Around the sides were big boxes and small chests inlaid with turquoise, lapis lazuli, and malachite and fitted with silver fastenings and trimmings. Tin, copper, and silver dishes, plates and cups gleamed from shelves and directly opposite the entrance a sentence from the Koran hung framed in silver, while near it was a picture of *Sheik ul Islam,* the highest spiritual personality for the Mohammedans.

Between two chests richly adorned with silver stood a frame something like an easel, carrying rifles, revolvers, sabers, spades, and *yatahans* or short sabers, some straight as stilettos and others curved like scythe and sickle.

"Well," said the Professor, "you have here a whole arsenal."

"Yes," nodded the old Tartar. "Times are stormy and we must defend ourselves and our fortunes. These are now hard, black days."

Obviously these "black days" were a sore trouble to him; for, having placed us comfortably on the cushions, he began to tell about the doings on the prairie. The Russian Government always made use of the hatred and strife among the different tribes under its dominion and the prairie of Chulyma-Minusinsk was no exception. To this country, which had belonged for centuries to the Abakan Tartars, the authorities sent colonists from the Ukraine, lazy, drunken, dissolute peasants who began to make hay on the lands belonging to the Tartars, to steal their horses, to wrong their women, and even to murder the Tartars themselves. The natives complained in vain to the authorities, who not only did not want to redress these wrongs, but even encouraged the Ukrainians in their encroachments. Exasperated, the Tartars took up their arms and the prairie became the arena of wild struggles, bloody vendettas and all the crimes that go with such a strife. No one thought of law; everyone defended his life and his possessions, combating the unwarranted abuses of the demoralized Ukrainian colonists. The high grass of the prairie covered many a corpse, which the winds later dried and scattered as dust over the saddened plains.

Spirin proved a most hospitable host. He had six wives, the eldest not less than fifty and the youngest a mere girl of sixteen, supple as an osier twig and with the big soft eyes of a deer. All these women were busy in the second *yurta* where the kitchen was located. As we sat at dinner, new dishes, each one more tasty than the last, were presented to us; hot *sulta,* a fat morsel from the sheep's breast roasted over the coals; *tzchiherty,* a broth made of chicken and eggs; *shashlyk* of mutton

with some acid, dry berries like cranberries; *shashlyk* of mutton kidneys; *azu,* a sort of Hungarian goulash, also made of mutton; *tamalik* or cakes with mushrooms and berries; a sweet cheese made of sheep's milk; a preserve of rhubarb, grapes, figs, and dates. We washed this all down with *kumyss,* the ever-present beverage of the steppes, and with burgundy and champagne specially imported from the town for our visit. After this banquet we drank endless glasses of tea served with fruit preserves of all kinds, jam, honey, and other sweets together with English biscuits from tin boxes.

The tea drinking is the ceremonial part of the dinner and is usually long and tedious, but on this occasion Spirin had carefully planned for our entertainment during this part of the feast. He ordered his wives to place before the *yurta* some carpets and cushions and some low tables and asked us to come out into the air.

"I will show you my best horses," he said with a smile and clapped his hands.

Our coachman, Alim, and the son of our host, Mahmet, immediately jumped in the saddle and rode off in the direction of the *auls.* They returned in fifteen minutes herding before them about fifty beautiful stallions, some black as ravens, some white or fallow. They came on at full speed with their heavy manes and magnificent tails combed by the prairie wind. The horses snorted loudly like the wild things they were, kicking and biting one another; their shining, bloodshot eyes seemed full of fire, and fire also appeared to issue from their flaring nostrils.

"These are wild young stallions, knowing no saddle and untouched by man's hand. Their blood is noble and they were reared in Chum-Bazlik, where the richest

grasses grow. The most noble in all our prairie, they are as strong as bears, as healthy as lynxes, and as swift as winged falcons. They are vicious and bold, ready to fight wolves or bears and unmatched in war. During the attack they fight with teeth and hoofs for their riders. The *argamaks* of the Turkomans, those horses which during the battle fight like demons and after the struggle course over the field to crush the heads of the fallen enemy, took their wild characteristics from this breed."

Spirin called something in Tartar to the two young men, who at once shouted furiously. In an instant the horses scattered in all directions, casting about in fright and rushing farther and farther away. Wonderfully mounted the Tartars followed them, taking their *arkan* or native lassoes and whirling them above their heads as they sped ever faster and faster. A marvelous race began. The wild stallions, free from burden, put at first some distance between themselves and the Tartars' mounts; but these, trained in long and steady pursuits, maintained an even speed and when the stallions, already a little tired by their mad gallop, began to slow insensibly, they little by little drew up on them. The riders gradually and cleverly directed the movements of the stallions, forcing them to describe on the prairie ever narrowing circles.

When finally the horses were again all huddled into one group the Tartars rose in the saddle and straightened out their coiling lassoes like striking snakes and again the herd scattered. The riders followed them and one could see that two of the stallions, one black and the second one fallow, began perceptibly to slacken their pace. For a time they reared and plunged in all directions, then both

fell down as though struck by lightning. Old Spirin laughed:

"The *arkan* has throttled them!"

Then we saw the two riders swing from their saddles and, cautiously approaching the struggling stallions, tighten the ropes. When they had drawn the throttle tight enough, they deftly slipped up to the beasts and tied their feet. Then after a moment the stallions, freed from the throttling ropes, got on their feet and tried to escape, but they soon found they were tied and after a few spasmodic attempts, gave up and stood still. The men put bridles on them and the next moment unshackled their feet. Though they plunged and reared, it was only a moment before the riders were back on their mounts, bending low in their saddles and bringing in leash these wild magnificent creatures never before touched by man's hand.

Soon they were before the *yurta* with ears laid back and teeth bared. Two saddles were brought and Alim held the black stallion by the bridle while Mahmet saddled him. We witnessed an extraordinary struggle of man and beast. The stallion was almost constantly in the air with its lithe body rearing and jumping until its hoofs seemed at times above the men, touching the earth but for a second and only to bound again. Mad with fury and fright, it neighed and snorted; yet Alim, strong as an oak, held it securely by the bridle and did not let go. The thongs of rawhide were strong as steel, while the bit cut the tender mouth of the steed so that it was red foam that flew, when it snorted and shook its head. Mahmet was, however, as alert as his steed and never

lost a chance to tighten bit by bit the girth. With this finally accomplished, he put on the stirrups. Alim, with the strength of a bull, forced the stallion's head to the earth and like a flash Mahmet was in the saddle, Tartar fashion, bending low and with knees sharply angled over the short stirrups. He gave a wild cry and lashed the stallion with his whip.

For a second the untamed beast stood like a rock, only its eyes flashing fury; then suddenly it reared as though it would fall over on its back. It reared, it plunged, it kicked, all in one mad whirlpool of movement that seemed impossible for any rider to live through; but all this time the bent form of the Tartar crouched in the saddle as a part of the writhing animal.

Despairing of throwing his rider, the stallion straightened himself and fled like an arrow into the prairie, clearing stones and ditches. I saw that Mahmet was holding the reins loosely, and lightly moving them in the air, was tapping the sides of the horse with his soft boots and sometimes lashing it with his whip. I saw too how the wonderfully muscled body of the animal strained and how it extended itself in the even, low flight of its graceful, strong limbs. Mahmet looked like a specter rider, as I could not make out the horse's hoofs touching the ground.

Even though the stallion was all this time on a slack rein, Mahmet brought it round in an immense circle back to the *yurta.* The foam fell from its sides and from its ever reddening mouth. After two more small circles I saw that which drew from me a cry of astonishment. The Tartar, seated on this mad Bucephalus, calmly bent to one side, let the reins fall and, taking out his pipe, leisurely filled and lighted it. With this done, he straight-

ened himself in the saddle and came right up to the tent. The stallion obeyed every movement of his hand and feet; it trembled but was already conquered.

"Well, here is a real prodigy!" I exclaimed, looking admiringly at Mahmet who sat quietly smiling, smoking and patting the foamy neck of his horse.

"It is nothing at all," laughed old Spirin. "This wild horse came to know that, if it did not obey, the feet of Mahmet against its sides could break its ribs."

When I looked at these feet of Mahmet, curved and powerful as the roots of an old oak, I felt it might be possible for him to break the bones of the horse.

Spirin's coachman, Alim, showed us things yet more difficult. Like his young master, he fitted the saddle on a wild stallion in a storm of protest; but with the beast so constantly off the ground, he evidently did not cinch the girth sufficiently, for, while he still had his weight in the mounting stirrup and had not yet caught the offside one, the saddle slipped to the side of the wild stallion, bringing Alim to the ground. The horse raced away and even old Spirin cried from fright.

Alim was dragged on the ground with his left foot still caught in the stirrup. His face was down and several times he was in mortal danger, as the horse trailed him over stones; but by some miraculous combination of sight and strength, he gave a thrust with his hands, which he was using to keep his head from striking the ground, and bounded himself over the worst of these stones.

While we were all still held by the first shock of the fall, something more incredible happened; for there was Alim swung round with his right foot pressed into the flank of the animal and his left hand grasping the bridle

and traveling thus with his feet spread wide apart and his body out in an almost horizontal position from the fleeing stallion's side. It happened in a flash and the steed was already drawing away down the prairie, yet we could plainly see Alim in his braced position work with the bridle and then go down again nearly to the ground under the horse's belly, where it looked as though he was trying to catch the feet of the galloping animal. After some effort he succeeded in slipping a noose on the near fore-leg and again strained himself out from the side of the horse, pulling the stallion's leg up against its belly and outward. For a time the beast continued to jump on three legs but shortly fell on its knees. Alim was out of the stirrup and on the stallion's neck like a wild cat and soon throttled it with a noose. After the horse had ceased to struggle, Alim kept the throttling thong tight with one hand and with the other managed to tighten the girth. In a second he was in the saddle and had loosened the noose and freed the foot. After this short but dramatic experience the stallion offered no further resistance and humbly trotted back to the *yurta,* subdued and obedient to its rider, who, in spite of his cut and bruised hands, smiled and spoke caressingly to his mount:

"At at, jaksze at! Toor! (Horse, horse, good horse! Be quiet!)"

This spectacle of breaking wild horses was the best recompense for our sufferings for the rich, heavy dinner of Spirin proved a sore trial for us. We remembered it for a long time and always afterward were careful how we partook of Tartar feasts. I even had a sharp tilt with my dear Professor over it.

"It was that *azu* which did not agree with us," he remarked bitterly.

"No, I believe that we ate too much of that *sulta,* which was so very fat," I contended.

"No, indeed," the Professor rebutted, "the *sulta* fat is light and easily digested; but that *azu* with its roots, vegetables, and dried berries was simply a poison."

I remained firm, however, in my conviction, while the Professor defended the *sulta* and violently attacked the *azu.* As we could not arrive at a mutual understanding, he subsequently steered clear of the *azu* and I avoided the *sulta.*

CHAPTER VI

A PRAIRIE DRAMA

WE had no premonition while with Spirin that we were in a family doomed to the great misfortune that befell it two days later.

Some days after our visit to the Tartar, the Professor sent me to do some geological work in the prairie. I was to search for such sulphur veins as might be the source of the sulphate of magnesium in the waters of Lake Szira. I had looked into ravines and cuts made by the spring floods and was examining the steep banks of the dry rivers on the prairie, when suddenly I saw a large flock of ravens and some big vultures wheeling above what I naturally supposed was a dead horse or ox; but, looking more carefully in this direction from a little mound near-by, I saw what looked like the body of a man in the grass.

As I went over to the spot, my heart stood still in my breast when I recognized in the corpses lying there these two daring and magnificent riders Mahmet, son of Spirin, and Alim, his big lieutenant. These splendid conquerors of a few days ago now lay here with mutilated faces and skulls smashed by an axe. I found no traces of struggle around them.

Hak, who was with me, minutely examined them and then, with his profound knowledge of such deeds, seriously observed:

"The heads of these Tartars were smashed with the back of an axe, and then, out of pure spite for the killed, their faces were mutilated."

We at once informed the police and old Spirin of the terrible tragedy. As we informed our Tartar host of his awful loss, our hearts bled for him in his grief and wild despair. The inquest proceeded immediately as there just happened to be a qualified judge visiting the medical institute at Szira. A few days later we learned what had occurred in the prairie where the blood of the two Tartars was shed.

To understand this drama one must know some of the details of the life of these plains. Of all their possessions the Tartars most value their studs, as they generally develop special individual breeds with distinct and valuable qualities. The Abakan stallions were already in great demand in the Altai region, where through them the quality of the local horses, formerly on the decline, had been not only maintained but greatly improved. Owing to this sharp demand, horse thieves from among the Ukrainian colonists stealthily hunted these horses, stole them, and sold them in the Altai. But it was no easy task, as the Tartar herdsmen guarding the studs were watchful and courageous and, being well armed, did not fear encounters with the robbers. Moreover, the herds are also guarded by the stallions, these wild and fearless animals, which attack marauding strangers with tooth and hoof. All this was true of Spirin's studs, but it was recently remarked that some stallions that ran with and guarded a whole group of mares abandoned the herd which then ran far away into the prairie. Only once had it been possible to overhaul such an escaped herd and

bring it back to camp. The herdsmen noticed many tracks of shod horses near the herd, made undoubtedly by some riders who disappeared when the Tartars came near. The runaway stallions when found had wounds all over their bodies, from which it was evident that, before abandoning their mares, they had fought with some enemy.

This tragedy was a mysterious enigma, as the experienced Tartars could trace nobody in the prairie and were lost in surmise. But the inquiring judge found the key to the mystery. He examined the wounded stallions and one of the recaptured herds as well as the traces of the shod horses and the road taken by the runaway herd, after which he ordered the police of the whole district to search for the owner of a big, red stallion, unshod and with one broken hoof.

Some days later the policeman from a village situated thirty-five miles from Szira brought a Ukrainian peasant who was the possessor of just such a horse. He did not bring the stallion, as the peasant said that it had run away and was being searched for. Though the judge threatened the peasant with long imprisonment if he did not make a clean breast of it, the latter stubbornly protested his innocence. Then the judge ordered him put into custody at police headquarters and, when he was lodged there, the judge himself came and spoke with him thus:

"I see that you are a sly bird, but in my life I have known better ones, for I have chased horse thieves in Turkestan and have caught courageous Turkomans and wary Persians. In these matters no one can deceive me. Remember this and now pay attention to what I am going

to tell you. You have an immense, vicious, red stallion with a broken hoof on its left hind leg. It has also a white tail. And it is a wise horse, as it learned from you the business of the thief's trade! This is what you do, my birdie. Having picked out your Tartar stud, you bring your red beast to it in the night. It fights with the Tartar stallion and is victorious, being bigger and stronger. The herdsmen pay no attention to the cries and neighs of the combatants and even if they do look in this direction, they find everything in order and sleep again. But they would not sleep again, if, during the daytime, you had not sneaked up to their camp and put sleep powder in their meat bags. When the red stallion has conquered its adversary, it, slowly at first then quicker and quicker, takes away all the mares and herds them to the place where you and other scoundrels like you lie in wait for them. Then you drive the horses off in the direction of the Altai, while your companions blot out the traces of the stud by galloping in the same direction on their shod beasts. And this is the whole game because afterwards everything is easy for you. You sell the horses to the Tartars and peasants of the Altai, you return to your village, you spend your money on vodka and beer and, when you have nothing more, you begin to think about a new adventure. But this time something upset your game for, immediately after the herdsmen had started in pursuit, you came back to their camp and wandered all round it, looking for something. What were you searching for in the prairie?"

The peasant, white and trembling, terrified by the tale of this sorcerer or devil of a judge, sat silent with wide open eyes. The judge continued:

"You see that I know everything. I also know why you came to the camp. One of you lost the bag with the sleep powder. You did not find this trace of your guilt as you were drunk; but I found it and here it is!"

Saying this the judge took from his pocket a little bag containing a powder concocted, as he told me afterwards, of the ground berries of belladonna and opium. The peasant fell on his knees and, begging for mercy, named the peasants who had driven the herd off to the Altai. The judge ordered pursuit in the shortest way—that is, by telegraph. The robbers were taken and the studs returned to Spirin. Since that affair Mahmet and Alim kept in close touch with the studs and carefully watched the herdsmen. On one of these journeys the relatives of the imprisoned peasants caught the Tartars and murdered them cruelly. But the perpetrators of the crime were not discovered.

When I asked the judge how he had unraveled this riddle, he replied:

"The methods of the horse thieves are known to me through my long judicial experience among these Eastern peoples. Certain features of this tragedy put me immediately on the trail. I had only to make sure. Examining the wounded stallions I found in their mouths some red horse hair and some long white hair from a horse's tail. There was no such stallion in the Spirin studs, besides on the field of battle I distinctly saw the spoors of the aggressor's hoofs, and had no doubt about its size. The bag of sleeping powder I found when investigating the camp of the herdsmen. I could not understand how they failed to remark an unknown stallion and how they allowed the stud to be taken away under their noses.

I inferred at first they were drunk with *buza* or *arraka,*[1] but found no trace of a drunken revel. Then I found the little bag in the sand. One of the Tartars had evidently stepped on it and pressed it into the earth and this was the reason why the robbers could not find it. And as to the murder of the son of Spirin and his worker, this is a regular occurrence in this country, where the law of revenge holds sway among the native Tartars and the Russians."

The judge was of course widely experienced and had keen intuition, otherwise he could not have so quickly unraveled the whole matter; but when I saw the tears of the old mother and of the wife of Mahmet, I realized the crushing fact that all the laws and legal processes could not restore to life the fine young Tartar, who knew so well how to conquer and master the wild steeds of his father's herds. With thoughts like these I watched the group of Tartars carrying the bodies of their lost ones to the little ridge where their graves awaited them; and there my eyes involuntarily alighted on the beautiful face of a young Tartar woman, quite a child yet. With longing and indescribable despair, she looked without a tear or a sigh into the face of the powerful Alim, attractive even in death. I thought that this giant and athlete had lighted the fires of prairie love in the heart of the young girl and that perhaps the avenging arm of justice might execute its sentence through the slim and gracious hand of this sad maiden who knew well the workings of vendetta law.

[1]A weak spirit made of fermented mare's milk.

CHAPTER VII

A BATTLE OF TARANTULAS

WHEN the first poignancy of the prairie drama had passed, we recommenced our work. Life is life: it weeps over its dead, visits their graves but continues its course full of struggle, energy, the wish for existence and wisdom.

After some days I went to make studies of Lake Shunet, which was known to be very salty and to have a thick layer of black ooze, smelling strongly of hydrogen-sulphide. I traveled in a little two-horse wagon with Hak, who had become very much attached to me as a result of my treating him as an equal.

After a drive of six miles, we noticed that the prairie grass was less abundant and later that the ground was covered with only a creeping grass that had soft stalks as red as though they were full of blood. This was *Salicornia,* a variety of grass adapted to soil saturated with salt. Finally, even this disappeared, leaving an entirely black prairie covered with salt crystals like hoar-frost. It was the so-called *Solonchak.*

Near this dead prairie I met for the first time graves of the native nomads. The well-known Russian ethnologist and archeologist, Adrianoff, killed afterwards in Tomsk in 1920 by the Soviet Government, proved that

these graves are those of the Ouigurs who here led a nomad life before the invasion of Jenghiz-Khan.

These graves were formerly well elevated, but are considerably worn down now. They were usually surrounded with from four to six stones, high slabs or pillars, monoliths of Devon freestone sometimes brought from great distances just such as I have seen on the Tuba River and in the praries between the Tuba and the Abakan, both of which are affluents of the Yenesei. These gravestones or dolmens stretch out in a long single line and disappear in the distance.

On some of these stones inscriptions were still visible. These were runic signs; this oldest alphabet of humanity, used not only as a means of communication beyond the carrying power of the human voice by delineating them on tablets or strips of bark, but also as an attempt by their users in their monumental inscriptions to carry down some word beyond the span of a single human life to future tribes. At this time I had only a passing look at these dolmens and monoliths, with which I became more intimately acquainted during a later journey through the country of the graves, that immense, historic cemetery of whole tribes and peoples who wandered across the vast plains of Central Asia drawn by an invisible magnet to the West, to the conquering of Europe, to the destruction of Christian civilization.

Finally, we came upon Lake Shunet framed in black, stinking mud with salt spots all over it, so bright in the full glare of the sun that our eyes ached as we looked upon it.

Not a bird was visible on the shores or the surface of the dead lake. It was dead, but it had died gracefully;

for on its surface were salt crystals sparkling like diamonds, which agglomerated into great sheets and sank to the bottom forming there thick layers that were gradually filling up the reservoir of the disappearing lake.

Wallowing through the evil-smelling mud, Hak and I made our way to the lake to take samples of the water for our chemical studies and to measure the temperature. When we were quite near the water, we were astonished to see that it was surrounded by a band of something coral red, about one foot wide. Not knowing what it could be, I bent down and discovered that it was formed of a mass of little beings already dead and rotting, and the cause of the disagreeable, sickly smell pervading the air. I collected a number of the bodies of the red beings in a flask and began to pour lake water into it. Suddenly, I saw in my glass reservoir little red crawfish no more than five millimeters in length swimming about very quickly but so delicate and ephemeral that after only a few minutes they were dead. The biologic studies subsequently established that they were the last living creatures in Lake Shunet and were called *Artemia salina.* Besides them only the *Beggiatoae* bacilli lived here, killing all the other life in the lake and at the same time preparing their own extinction.

I sent Hak in to try the depth of the lake. Taking off his garments he entered the water and, when he was far out from the shore, he called back:

"It's like walking on glass."

This made me curious and, undressing, I followed him.

I found that the bottom of Shunet was hard and polished like crystal or marble, formed of the salt that

had been for centuries precipitated by the action of the sun and the wind on the surface of the lake. This deposit was a high grade of kitchen salt with a purity of 99.89 per cent.

As the day was very hot, we decided, after our investigations, to take a bath, but we found that nowhere in the lake was there a depth of more than three feet. We had a great deal of difficulty with this bath. When we tried to plunge in, the water threw us back as though we were well-corked empty bottles. With our attempts at swimming we experienced no little enjoyment as we floated on the surface of the water almost as if we were lying on the floor of a room; only this floor was not stable, pillowing and cushioning us as we turned on it from side to side, sometimes on our backs, sometimes on our breasts.

"Well, what deviltry is this?" cried Hak with loud laughter. "It is a real scandal! One of the worst things you can say about a man is that he is as stupid as a cork, and here I feel myself to be a real cork bobbing on the water. Do you suppose our minds are also corks?"

Hak was quite right, as our bodies had the same relationship to the water of Shunet as a cork bears to ordinary water.

We did not succeed in taking a bath, but instead we made a very curious discovery. We noticed that something was moving towards us from the shore. Sitting in the water we watched this phenomenon until suddenly Hak jumped to his feet and cried:

"Get out as quick as you can!"

With some reluctance I followed him, because I wanted to see what it was. I soon made out an immense tarantula

spider walking with its long hairy legs on the water without breaking the surface, although, as this bent slightly under the spider, it was traveling very carefully. It threateningly advanced its feelers and carried its head high, ready for the attack or defence with the aid of its virulent poison. It passed fairly close to me with the warlike expression of a battleship with all its guns run out and seeming to say:

"I advise you not to meddle in matters which do not concern you!"

We looked with awesome respect on this giant as it slowly went away in the direction of the opposite bank.

When we finally left the water, we at once cried out with pain, as we had the feeling that thousands of needles were pricking us. It was the intensely salt character of the water that had given these pains. After some minutes we were covered from head to foot with a thin layer of crystallized salt, flaking off when we bent our limbs or made any quick movement.

"It looks," laughed Hak, "just as though some one has broken all the windows in us!"

And the witty Hak was once more right. Finally, all these glass panes fell away, leaving the salt-irritated skin as painful and red as though it had been scalded. Some days passed before we were rid of the disagreeable and vexing pain.

I spent with Hak two days on the shores of Shunet making various studies of the water, salt, and ooze of the lake, catching *Beggiatoae* and the red, nimble crawfish and collecting plants and insects.

I made some curious discoveries regarding the tarantula with whose holes the neighborhood was thickly

dotted. These holes are quite round and have two long passages leading in opposite directions from their lower end. Of these the longer one is the family home of the spider while the shorter is a fortress, from which the spider makes its attacks on its victims and defends itself and its home from intruders, especially the big brown dung beetles with hard shells and with glands that secrete a stinking intoxicating odor. These beetles hunt the spiders and devour them. To protect itself, the spider builds its barbed wire entanglement of strong cobwebs which entangle the enemy and thus materially assist the tarantula in his battle with the foe. At the end of this fortress, the spider has also a small web in which it puts the victims caught outside and dragged to the hole. This species of spider hunts in the grass and with a swift attack jumps on its victims and kills them with its teeth or carries them back to its hole, keeping them as live meat in its web. I found one hole in which five big caterpillars were thus imprisoned behind these bars of strong cobweb.

The tarantula's bite is very painful and the bitten place swells terribly, causing a high fever in the whole body. I was told that people bitten by tarantulas, unless the quickest measures against the poison were taken, often die from the bite.

Strangely enough, the worst foe of the tarantula is a sheep. It has no fear of the tarantula's bite and, putting its tongue right into the spider's hole, waits until the confident lord of battle fastens the warm tongue with teeth and hairy feet; then, with a visible appreciation of the agreeable sensation, the sheep closes its eyes with enjoyment and swallows the angry tarantula as we swallow a

Blue Point or Lynnhaven, only without lemon or horse radish.

I ordered Hak to catch for me the biggest and best specimens he could find and for this I gave him a big glass jar with a cork. My helpmate accepted this duty willingly, just as he did everything willingly and with spirit; and I would add, in this connection, that all three of the fugitives were always good tempered, ready, and industrious.

Only once I noticed while at Lake Szira that they remained in their room with heads sadly bent, whispering something one to another. When I asked the reason for their sadness, Trufanoff, who was then acting as cook for our expedition, answered for them all.

"Ah—!" he sighed profoundly. "What can be said, Sir? It is easy to guess. We are now as other people, nobody looks upon us as wild beasts, monsters, and the scum of humanity because you protect us with your clean, respected names. But this real life will soon end for us; you will go away from here and then we shall have to return to solitary places, to dens in the rocks and in the ground, to the forests and at times even into bushes on inaccessible marshes. We shall again be wolves hunted by everybody. We shall return to the hunger, disease, and torture of vagrant life. Damn it! It is not worth while to live longer in such a way!"

As he finished, he bent his head in black reflection. The rest were silent also; but after a moment, Hak said in a voice previously unknown to me:

"Well, it must be. We have life in us and we must live, even though it be as wolves."

At these words Sienko raised his grizzled, wild head and mumbled:

"I have yet accounts to settle with my witnesses. I will not die before them. I will live for my revenge, for their black hour; but we shall all remember you and we shall grieve at leaving you!"

Such were the thoughts in the heads of our strange companions of Lake Szira.

Hak, taking the glass jar, went to hunt the tarantulas. I saw him putting in his breeches pocket a little bottle of water.

"You are going to drink water?" I asked with astonishment, knowing that Hak always spoke with disgust of cold water, and liked only vodka or tea.

"No, it will serve to dislodge the spider from its hole," he answered. "When I pour some water into the hole, the spider, which does not like water any more than I do, will come out and I shall then immediately invite it into the jar!"

He returned after an hour with the jar half full of his game, their hairy legs and bodies twisted together in a solid, dark mass. As we set the jar on the ground and began studying the spiders, I felt that the eyes of the whole spider world were fixed on me in curiosity and hate. When I was about to pour alcohol over them to preserve them for our collection, Hak stopped my hand, saying:

"Don't do it, you will see a funny game. Afterwards I shall catch you as many spiders as you want."

"What is it going to be?" I asked.

"I shall not tell you," he laughed; "you will see for yourself. I tell you it is a play, a scandal, very like human plays and scandals."

He laughed again and in his voice were tones of disdain and mockery. With my curiosity thus aroused I began to study the spiders. They lay in a thick mass without any movement; sometimes only a single leg quivered and contracted furiously. This calm lasted for some minutes, then somewhere from the bottom, an entirely black fellow came out, scattering the others. It raised high on its legs and threateningly thrust out its feelers and head.

Suddenly, with a violent movement, the spider sprang on its nearest neighbor and thrust its teeth into it. Some futile quivers of the victim and all was over. Licensed by this first crime, the black tarantula madly went about killing and wounding the others. A wild dance of death ensued. It was impossible to distinguish single spiders as they struggled together, twisting and jumping, giving and receiving thrust. The first criminal, badly mangled in the whirlpool of battle, lay dead. Suddenly, I saw a big red spider squirm out from the mass of combatants and spring up into the narrow neck of the flask, where it wedged itself and hung while the battle of life and death continued beneath it.

"It is a young tarantula," exclaimed Hak, "a young and sly one, like all red people."

This red spider hung there for a long time until the moment when the last of the combatants remained alone, severely wounded and only feebly moving its legs. Then the red spider dropped on it, giving it a last thrust, and began to devour it without scruple.

"Well," exclaimed Hak. "Is it not often so among men in great pots—towns?"

In spite of myself I smiled, for the simile was true.

Hak without further comment opened the jar and

scattered the spiders on the ground. Seeing the red spider making off, he murmured:

"Run away, my friend, life is yours because you are wise," and he went to look for more tarantulas. He returned when it was already dark and began to prepare tea and soup over the fire. Meanwhile, I poured alcohol over the tarantulas, with which the jar was almost full, and brought the diary of our work up to date.

During the evening meal, Hak, taking his inspiration from the jar of tarantulas, began one of his numerous stories.

"Once after my escape from prison in Atchinsk I wanted to go to Turkestan and somewhere in the Kirghiz prairie near Lake Balkash I came upon a hovel of a man in a very solitary spot. He was neither Kirghiz nor Russian. I couldn't make out what he was, but knew only that he spoke bad Russian and did not like to talk about himself. While spending some nights with him, I remarked that he went out after sundown and returned very late, carrying something heavy under his coat. Waking in the night, I saw him bent over a pot on the stove in which he was cooking something.

"One day some riders came to our shelter. They were Kirghizi, Sartes, and some natives from Turkestan. I was astonished to see them armed, as I knew how severely the Russian authorities punish the natives for carrying weapons. I took them to be robbers and felt in sympathy with them; and they, having found out that I was prison meat, became talkative and frank. I soon learned that they were workers for some inn-owners along the road from Bokhara to Krasnovodsk. These innkeepers robbed merchants coming to Bokhara and Khiva after their sales

of cattle, horses, silk, and wool to the Russian factories in Krasnovodsk. They committed the robberies in a strange manner.

"As the merchants were always accompanied by armed detachments, the innkeepers had to work through other means than force and so added to their visitors' drinks the so-called 'tarantula wine.' This is made from tarantulas maddened before death, soaked in alcohol, and boiled for a long time with all sorts of berries and herbs. It is of a greenish-brown color and has a disgusting smell. A few drops added to any drink cause almost immediate faintness, which passes after some hours but leaves, however, in the victim, a form of madness of long duration, loss of memory, and incoherent movements and words. The owner of the inn robs the merchant and his men during the torpor, and afterwards his assistants take them somewhere far off in the prairie and leave them there. Almost invariably the victim cannot remember what befell him or where he last was. With this the adventure generally ends; for, even if he did remember the whole affair and returned with his men to try to recover his lost wealth, he would have to meet the armed workers of the innkeeper and would inevitably succumb to these ruffians collected from among hunted criminals, adventurers, and other lost souls. Such were the men who arrived at the solitary house where I was hiding. You already understand, I suppose, that the owner of the house was a maker of tarantula wine. His industry was terrible; however, I saw him doing a lot of good. From every part of the Kirghiz country, from the Seven Rivers, sick people arrived suffering from rheumatic pains, some with swollen feet and hands, others bent double and hardly able

to walk. This manufacturer of the poisonous wine doctored them all willingly and without taking any pay.

"He gave them some herb infusion with a small addition of his terrible wine which in this potion did not act with such disastrous effect. Then he ordered them to lie in the sun and after some days they went away nearly or quite healed, thanking him profoundly. They proved their gratitude not with gifts but in another odd but useful fashion. They kept him carefully informed just when and where the police, the judge, or any other state official was moving, which enabled their uncertificated physician to take care of himself. Owing to the character of my sanctuary I was here quite safe, as I could always disappear like camphor, if an unwelcomed guest were to visit our establishment. For almost half a year I helped my host to make this tarantula wine for which the robber inns paid so well. I learned how to madden the spiders with the heated iron rod and became intimately acquainted with all their habits."

"And why did you leave this shelter?"

He waved his hand, saying nonchalantly:

"Oh, it was because of a woman."

"Tell me how it came about."

"It was simple enough," he answered. "The craving for an immediate, big haul proved the undoing of both of us, my friend and myself. Once a well-dressed lady came quite unexpectedly to our den and remained for a long time closeted with my host, discussing something evidently very important. Curious and anxious, I began eavesdropping. Soon I heard the voice of the lady:

" 'Well, this is agreed?' she was saying. 'I will give

you all my rings and a thousand roubles besides, but it must act immediately.'

" 'Don't be anxious about that,' mumbled my friend in his broken Russian. 'You put ten drops into the brandy your husband drinks before dinner and that will be the last dinner he will ever eat. May I be struck by lightning if this is not true.'

"The lady went away and prepared that last dinner for her husband, but did it in such a way that the authorities investigating the death suspected crime and arrested her. Under pressure she confessed from where she secured the poison. Quite unexpectedly the police came for us, descending on us as a hawk descends on partridges and only when we were already manacled and seated in the carriage to be taken to prison, did one of our medical clients arrive to warn us that the police were some kilometers from our hut. This was truly belated news. We were then for a long time in prison and all through a woman." . . .

Ending this tale he lighted his pipe and, getting up, said:

"It is time for sleep, Sir."

But this tarantula day had made a deep impression on me. For a long time I turned from side to side on my thick saddle-cloth thinking that it would not be very nice if a black, hairy tarantula should creep from some hole underneath my cloth and fasten its teeth into my foot. These vicious and disgusting banditti of the prairie were not pleasing to me. The only ones I felt no animus against were those in my jar from which I was making the tarantula wine, not, of course, for a beautiful lady or for banditti of the road, but for my zoological collection.

Hak, noticing that I was still awake, asked in a sleepy voice:

"You cannot sleep, Sir?"

"No, I can't," I answered, "I am afraid of those spiders."

He yawned and replied:

"Don't be afraid! No tarantula will venture over the edge of your *koshma* (cloth) of sheep's wool. It has been proved millions of times."

CHAPTER VIII

THE CURSE OF ABUK KHAN

IT was still a long time before we finished our wanderings on the prairies of Chulyma-Minusinsk. We visited and studied lakes rich in kitchen salt, where there were primitive installations for extracting it from the lake water; some containing soda, as the Lake of the Geese and Saletra Lake; some with Glauber salts resembling Lake Szira and quite a number of others. We visited the "Julia Mine" with its layers of copper ore where Englishmen were at work; we saw deposits of iron and manganese and advanced ever further south in the direction of the Minusinsk district among the last ridges of the Great Altai. As we penetrated deeper into the Chulyma prairies on the left bank of the Yenesei we came across more and more frequently large and small dolmens, sometimes finding great clusters of them, which marked the *horodyshcha* or common graves of earlier tribes overtaken here by some catastrophe.

This country, where the Abakan Tartars camp with their herds, is a vast, common, historic cemetery used at various intervals by the Ouigurs, Soyots, Khalchas-Mongols, Olets, Djungars, and numberless other nomadic tribes, human crowds nursed on the fostering bosom of Asia, this mother of peoples. All these, urged by every

known motive and reason, inhabited or crossed these endless grass lands traversed by the red range of Kizill-Kaya and its branches, which join the Altai Mountains to the southwest.

Here rode the hordes of Jenghiz the Conqueror, of Tamerlane the Lame, of the terrible Goondjur, and of the last scion of the Great Mongol, Amursan Khan. In former times, the same road was taken by merchants of Babylon and Ecbatana and by the warlike adventurers from the northern slopes of Pamir. All of them left behind the graves of their killed or dead, marked by these red monoliths or dolmens. One can find in these historic tombs swords, arrows, and axes of bronze and iron, copper and silver horse bits and stirrups, golden bridle buckles and women's ear-rings; but only rarely the bones of their owners, for time and nature have destroyed these human relics.

Among the most numerous small dolmens, sometimes a proud arrogant pile raises itself crowned by a slab of freestone. There are the graves made by the bloody Jenghiz Temuchin. He erected them on his fields of battle over the bodies of his sons, his chiefs, and his warriors, thus marking the bloody road of a great conqueror. Even until today they are landmarks from the Urals to Peking and Tashkent, landmarks to measure the otherwise uncharted prairie expanses. A traveler may ask a Tartar herdsman:

"How far is it to the Asul camp?"

The latter will think a moment and reply:

"As far as five times the distance from the little Jenghiz grave to the Kara-Jenghiz grave."

In this wise the prairie roads are still measured and this is all that the monuments of the bloody founder of

the Mongol State mean to this region today, milestones along a prairie trail.

The impressionable traveler feels that above these graves and above this ocean of prairie grass, the shadows of long-dead heroes and martyrs are hovering still, and that the red glare of conquering fires has not yet altogether disappeared from some corner of the blue-gray sky, and that somewhere the terrible voices of war and murder are not yet silent. Each stone seems to have its story or legend. Perhaps by this slab once sat musing the very Khan himself who, after the great *Kurultai* (Council) took thousands of the nomads from near the Chinese Wall and led them to the Dnieper, drowning the earth with blood and filling the rivers and streams with the flood of captives' tears.

I distinctly sensed with awe and emotion the stories of the battles which took place here and left after them graves and legends, making vocal again the tones of the stern warriors or the sobs and plaints of the victims. It seemed to me that the grass whispered unknown tales of long past times and of the people reposing under the dolmens; and that these monoliths, with grim effort, struggle to keep alive the names of the heroes who found their final rest on this trail of races, nations and tribes.

A sadness and deep emotion came over me as I wandered among the dolmens and *horodyshcha* and my soul called loudly:

"Where are you, all you who came from the banks of the Euphrates, from Tarim, Kerulen, the banks of the Yellow River; all you who were born in mountains of Kwen-lun, Pamir, Tian-shan, the Great Khingan, and among the woody Tannu-Ola? Do you remember the

aims and the stories of your life? Did you find repose or eternal torture in the unknown country where your spirit went when your body was taken by the earth, adorned with red slabs and dolmens to commemorate and glorify you? Why are you silent when questioned by a living soul? Give a sign that something remained after you, something better and more durable than the body and bones which have disappeared without a trace."

Such were the thoughts which occupied my mind as I studied these old stones over the graves of the unknown wanderers of history. For the most part the pillars and slabs were plain, but on some I found runic inscriptions, circles, triangles, squares, zigzags, arrows, and dots placed without any apparent design sometimes something like the Hindoo or Tibetan writing, subtle and difficult to read. On others, a knotty writing like the lace of the Mongolian alphabet; then something resembling the characters of Assyria or Babylonia—all unknown, mysterious, alluring in their possibilities of new historic and ethnographic discoveries.

Finding a big and unusually imposing dolmen I wanted to make a photograph of it. It was near Black Lake, where we spent two days, studying a fairly large installation for extracting salt. The dolmen stood in a small basin, surrounded by mounds covered with bits of Devon freestone and lumps of copper ore. It was a magnificent specimen consisting of sixteen big columns of about eight feet in height surrounding the grave, traces of whose elevation were yet visible. On the northern stones I discovered some runic signs frequently repeated. The valley was profoundly calm without a single disturbing element and I had the feeling that I was in a temple or

before an open grave. I made two photographs from different sides of the dolmen and, just as I was putting away my apparatus, a Tartar herdsman came riding up.

He asked what I was doing, sadly shook his head and, leaving his horse to graze, sat down near me.

The dolmens did not interest him, but he told me that near us was the road of the *bagadir* or great warrior. I asked him to show it to me. Some three hundred steps from the dolmens a ditch five feet deep led to the bank of the Yenesei.

Pointing to the ditch which ended on the summit of the rocky cliffs along the river, the Tartar said:

"A long time ago, before our Tartars came here from Abakan, some tribes, under the leadership of old Prince Goon, camped in the prairies. Goon was killed in battle. His son buried him on the summit of the mountains surrounding Buluk-Kul and, as there were no hard, red stones for a monument, he came each morning to the bank of the Yenesei, took these red slabs and brought them before nightfall to Lake Buluk. It was almost a day's journey to the lake, and the stones were big and heavy, heavier than two bulls. Such a *bagadir* was the son of Goon that, carrying these enormous loads and traveling as fast as a wild buck, he made this *bagadir* road with his powerful feet on the soft prairie soil as well as on the rocks."

I had several times heard such stories of roads made by Tartar giants in other parts of the country and always the hero of these stories was a son carrying stones from far-away places to the grave of his father. It must be a theme of the native poetry showing the homage of respect and love of sons for their fathers. However,

the stories were current only among the natives of the Yenesei, Tuba, Amyl, and Abakan districts; farther to the south and east I did not hear them.

That same evening I developed my negatives of the dolmen. How astonished I was to find nothing on the plates! They were exposed but carried no images. In the morning I went to the dolmen to try again, having loaded my camera with fresh Lumière plates from a new box. On developing I again found nothing on the plates. As these were new and good and the camera was working properly on other subjects, the cause must have been outside the apparatus. The only possible hypothesis I could think of was that in the valley where the dolmen stood there might exist the rare but possible phenomenon of the interference of rays where the dead waves of light made no impressions on the plates. This hypothetical explanation for a time checked my further speculations and decided me to waste no more exposures on this dolmen.

Later when revisiting this dismal country of Black Lake to study the mineral and soda springs and the deposits of copper ore in various parts of the basin, I met some Tartar riders among whom was a *muedzin* or priest. While we rode along together for a considerable distance the Tartars asked me about life in other countries and I reciprocated with questions about theirs.

The *muedzin* or *moulla,* as a man a little more learned, told me of certain historical episodes, principally from the epoch of the expedition of the Mongols to Europe, and then related to me a story which I had never heard before.

"When Jenghiz-Khan came to our prairie through

Amyl, Kemchik, and Abakan," said the *moulla,* "the courageous Ouigurs were then camping here. They were then but the remnants of a formerly numerous people which had held power over much of Asia and had constituted the greatest nomad empire in history. When it fell, the remains of the Ouigurs, crossing the ranges of the Sayan and the Altai, took refuge in these prairies under their Khans, who were the descendants of the great Ouigur rulers. Later, when the hordes of Jenghiz overflowed these prairies, murdering all who did not obey them and killing their cattle and horses, the last Ouigur Khan, Abuk, was then reigning here.

"This Khan sent to Jenghiz two riders with the petition that the great chief cross his prairies without injuring the population in any way. Jenghiz killed one of the riders, as he was the son of Abuk, and with rich gifts bribed the second to tell Abuk that Jenghiz would follow the right bank of the Yenesei. This rider, who was one of the trusted lieutenants of the Khan, knew how to reassure his master and to prevent him from preparing his defense. The armies of Jenghiz attacked him in the night and were easily victorious. Abuk was captured and murdered; and, when going to his doom he exclaimed:

" 'I hate everybody and everything! Woe on the man who shall take anything from the place where I die. I shall revenge myself on him. My spirit, like an autumn fog, will remain here!'

"Thus spoke Khan Abuk," continued the *moulla.* "Jenghiz, with his warriors and riches, swept farther on as a destroying flame. The remaining Ouigurs set up round the place where their ruler had been killed, red

stones on which they traced his words of hate and his eternal curse. Once some men came here, planning to take away the stones with the inscription; but one was killed by a horse and the second, in a boat, was drowned. Our Tartars imagined that great treasures were buried as offerings in the grave of Abuk and wanted to seize them. When they began to dig, a fog arose and hid the earth from them; their spades struck only stones, from which fire and dust spurted. Three of these men were blinded and the fourth one was killed as he passed along the rocky road to the river. Some years ago a Russian painter wanted to paint the grave of Abuk-Khan, but finally fled in terror as he came here three times and never could see the stones because they were covered with thick clouds that rose from the earth."

"Show me this grave," I begged, as I always liked and to this day still like all mysterious places in which the apparent mystery may be but the cloak of some natural reason.

"We must pass near the grave," answered the *moulla*, "as we wish to take a rest by Black Lake where we have a *kunak* (friend), a Russian."

We continued our journey, amusing ourselves with all sorts of tales. Finally, one of the Tartars who had ridden ahead turned in the saddle and cried:

"The grave of Abuk-Khan!"

I gave an exclamation of astonishment: it was the dolmen I could not photograph.

"Why," thought I, "did old Abuk put his hand over my Zeiss lens?"

Urged by a new curiosity I decided to have one more try. In the night I prepared fresh plates, over-

hauled my camera, checking it up in every detail, and awaited the morning with the same feeling with which I await an interesting and unusual hunt.

At nine the next morning I was again at the dolmen. The sun was bright. The red monoliths seemed to be like steel ingots, red from the fire. I went round the dolmen, choosing three places, and made two snapshots and one long time exposure of twenty seconds. Then I had to wait impatiently till evening to develop my mysterious photos made at the grave of the hater of "everybody and of everything."

At noon the Professor returned and after dinner we went to a large village near the bank of the Yenesei, from where we were to go by boat to the south to study some layers of salt which were reported to be saltpeter.

Our wagon rolled swiftly over the hard prairie, while a second with our workers and luggage followed. Near the village a dog sprang out from under a dolmen. The horses were frightened, swerved the wagon to the right and afterwards swung round sharply, throwing us both out. I lighted on a heap of stones, twisted and bruised my left arm, which from that time has always been smaller and weaker than my right one, and smashed my photographic apparatus so completely that the Zeiss lens and the cases with the plates were reduced to fragments.

When I got up, covered with bruises and feeling a sharp pain in my left arm, I could not keep back the exclamation:

"May the devils roast you in hell, Abuk, for your stupid hate!"

The Professor, who had lost his spectacles and broken his watch, was much astonished and began to ask the

meaning of my imprecation. When I told him the story of Abuk and my photographic tilt with him, he smiled and said:

"This is really a strange coincidence; but this Mr. Abuk is truly a rancorous individual!"

But I felt wronged, bruised, and angry and I shall never forget that damned and damning Ouigur.

Old Jenghiz-Khan must have had good reasons for murdering Abuk, but he ought to have compelled him to sign a contract that he would not be a bandit after death!

CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS OF A PRAIRIE TRIBE

DURING the whole summer and until late in the autumn we traveled the prairie between the Abakan Mountains and the Siberian Railway. We visited the left bank of the Yenesei where the Abakan Tartars camp, a mixed tribe composed of the remains of various Mongolian nations who traversed this prairie and left many of their people upon it. The Abakan Tartars resist civilization and today have the culture of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries which made such a distinct imprint upon the social and state régime of all Asia. The Jenghiz or the so-called "prairie law," intermixed with Koran regulations, holds sway here and is not modified or affected by anything of the present.

The family régime has all the characteristics of tribes leading a nomadic, warlike life in which woman is but an object of pleasure. She has no value since the nomad warrior, who may be killed in a fight tomorrow, does not wish home ties of any permanency. He possesses her today and tomorrow will leave her without regret or remembrance; and, when obliged to fly before the enemy, he will even murder her with his knife to prevent her falling into the hands of his pursuers. And, if the life of this nomad be more quiet, he regards woman as a beast for work only, forcing her to toil from sunrise till

late in the night and withholding not only pure, spiritual love, but even respect for her. This want of love and respect for women is clearly mirrored in the family life where the woman is always a servant and slave, from which fate nothing but an accident can save her.

The Tartar looks about for a wife among the daughters of his acquaintances but, following the Eastern custom, never broaches the subject to the girl and does not even speak with her. He sends gifts to the father, to whom the matchmaker then says:

"My *kunak* will at sunrise tomorrow ride a bay horse round your *yurta* and will throw on the ground the knotted strap."

"Tell your *kunak*," answers the father or the brother, "that he is a thief, and that a bullet will not miss him, if he approaches our camp again at sunset."

After this ritualistic exchange the matchmaker receives gifts for himself and for his friend. The young Tartar, fulfilling his promise, rides round the *yurta* and drops a strap with a knot tied in it. Before sunset, the parents tie the hands of the girl and leave her in the prairie covered with a veil. At sunset the young man arrives, lifts the girl to his saddle and rides towards her *yurta*. At this point of the ceremony he must be very careful and able and have his horse well in hand.

As he passes near the camp, the father or elder brother gives an alarm cry and shoots at the rider, aiming just in front of the horse's head. If the rider does not hear the cry or is not able to check his horse at once, he may be shot. This not infrequently happens, though for another reason. When the father is old and has no son, he orders one of his workers to shoot at the bridegroom.

Often such a worker is in love with the daughter of his master, and hopes by marrying her, to become a free citizen of the prairie. Seeing his hopes in danger of frustration, he draws square on the target and gives no alarm. If the shot be true, the unhappy bridegroom falls heavily from his horse, and a new hope kindles its fire in the heart of the family hired man. He runs to the girl, takes from her wrists the leather thongs, and perhaps whispers to her simple words of primitive love, unbridled as the prairie nature.

If the bridegroom succeeds in bringing his chosen one to his own camp, he sets her down on the ground, remaining himself in the saddle and, leading her by the strap, conducts her round his tent, then cuts the knot and makes her enter her new home. The rites are now finished and the next day the young couple will send to the bride's parents the *kalym* or marriage portion, consisting of the cattle, money, and other presents which the parents have previously stipulated.

Such marriages, in which only the wishes of the man are taken into consideration and the woman is left without any right to protest, are the cause of frequent tragedies in the prairie life. I have spoken already of the suicides among these unhappy slaves of Tartar wives. There are also other tragedies, born when the red flower of love begins to bloom in the woman's heart and with this love comes jealousy, wild and regardless as this ocean of grass, sands, bare mountains, and terrible, cold, winter winds.

Women possess the secret of preparing poison from the berries of hemlock and from the roots of *gazam,* a mysterious plant which is much sought for and to pay

for which the women even steal the finest horses from their husbands' studs. The *shaman* doctors help the deluded women and, knowing the medicinal and poisonous properties of grasses and herbs, prepare for them love elixirs and amulets or unfailing poisons for the rival, the new wife, or for the master husband.

Only three years ago I again traversed these prairies where centuries before millions of cattle and horses grazed. It was a wilderness. The Tartars had gone south across the Mongolian frontier, fleeing before the criminal terror of the Soviets; the grass was burned by purposely set fires, or devastated by locusts.

Was it God's punishment, the curse of Abuk-Khan, . . . or the revenge of the wronged shades of great chiefs and heroes of the long dead tribes?

I came across bodies of Tartars murdered by the Bolsheviks, the bones of sheep and cattle that had belonged to their herds.

Near Black Lake, where two decades before I had camped with the learned Professor and with the fugitives from the Russian prisons, I saw the burned buildings of the salt refinery and the ruins of houses. Only one little hovel remained, occupied by the keeper and his family, waiting for the death that was sure to come.

As a symbol of this tragic, hopeless life, I saw on the summit of the mountain, sharply outlined against the soft, evening spring sky, the dark form of a wolf.

It stood motionless as a bronze figure; then suddenly it raised its head, stretched its neck, and emitted a howl. It howled for a long time, longingly and threateningly, as if it were calling death, ruin and forgetfulness.

Where are you, Oh my young days? Where are the thoughts and ideals of my youth? Was it this that I expected from life and civilization when, wandering among these dolmens twenty years ago, I listened to the stories of buried centuries and dreamed that a powerful culture would come and stay the hand of destruction that touched these dying tribes? When I worked here for the progress and happiness of humanity and to give a better destiny to this boundless land, so appealing in its simplicity,—were these the pictures that I thought to see here in the future?

Finally, was it this which I expected from the strongest phenomenon of progress, revolution, when in the name of progress and in protest against the criminal injustices of the Government of the Tsar, I threw myself in 1905 into the whirlpool of the first revolution and for my zeal languished two years in the Tsar's prisons?

No! It was not all this which my soul wanted.

People say that revolution is progress. But is it always so?

The country of death and graves in the Chulyma-Minusinsk prairies with the whispers of its grass and stones pronounced the same sentence as did Hak, when we parted with our strange assistants not far from Minusinsk at the end of September.

"It will be bad news for us without you, but your fate is the worse. Hungry and cold we shall await our end; but round us will be the free forests, while you in towns, you will fight with the slyness and malignity of life which each year is more sly, more insidious. You will die, and dying you will hear the cries and groans of those whom town life murders."

They pressed our hands warmly and, looking deeply into our eyes, went away, back into their hunted life; they went in Indian file like wolves to hide in the bush, as they hated and feared the frequented main roads, the towns and strange people. In the edge of the thicket they paused, inspecting the neighborhood, silent and watchful.

They were then like the wolf of Black Lake, that howled with hate because the progress of humanity condemned it to hunger and death. From its skyline it cursed the sly, insidious life of which Hak spoke—Hak, the misguided criminal, who was grateful for each understanding word, for each proof of comprehension of his sick, starved soul.

Part II

THE TIGER COUNTRY

Part II

THE TIGER COUNTRY

CHAPTER X

THE PEARL OF THE EAST

BETWEEN the river Amur, the Korean frontier, the Pacific Ocean, and the Manchurian boundary lies the Ussurian country. It is traversed by the Ussuri River with its largest affluents, the Sungacha and the Daobi Ho, and is separated into two parts, the Ussuri basin and the maritime slope, by the mountains of Sikhota-Alin.

It is a strange country, a mixture of north and south. Pines, firs, cedars, and Arctic birches grow beside walnuts, limes, cork oaks, dimorphous palms, and vines. The reindeer, the brown bear, and the sable live in the same forest with the tiger, the boa constrictor, and the red wolf. On the waters of the lakes and on the marshes round Hanka the northern goose, swan, and duck mingle with the Australian black swan, the Indian flamingo and the Chinese heron and Mandarin ducks. A riddle or a joke of Nature?

And legend, this flower of the thought and imagination of the native, says:

"When God finished the creation of the world and had put everywhere the allotted trees, bushes, herbs, animals, birds, and reptiles, only one part of the earth remained bare and without life, the country traversed by the river Ussuri. The Spirit of the River cried in a loud voice:

" 'Creator, Thou hast given to all lands magnificent gifts and only this country Thou hast not favored. Be gracious and bestow upon it gifts according to Thy wisdom and mercy!'

"God heard the voice of the River Spirit and, taking from everywhere something, plants, animals, birds, reptiles, and precious stones, spread them all in the country of the Ussuri. The land bloomed at once and was full of life and numerous tribes arrived, seeking happiness and riches."

Such is the legend, and the naturalist Maack, who visited this country, says in his notes that from the standpoint of natural philosophy he has nothing to say against it.

The Russian explorers have since earliest times called the Ussurian country "The Pearl of the East," and they are right.

I went to Vladivostok by order of the Russian Government to study the markets of the Far East, which gave me the opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the country and with its economic value. Shortly after my arrival I was chosen scientific secretary of the Oriental Department of the Russian Geographical Society, which gave me free access to all libraries, museums, and archives and thus greatly facilitated my personal studies.

In the course of my chemical and geological studies

of the coal deposits scattered through the Ussurian country and along the whole Pacific shore of the Russian Dominions, I visited and traveled over much of the Ussurian Province, the island of Sakhalin, the Kamchatka peninsula and the shores of Behring Sea. These wanderings brought me many impressions and stories of the life of these little-known regions, some of which I shall attempt to set down in the following chapters.

It was February when I arrived in Vladivostok and the brilliant sun of these Oriental shores was already warm. The trees were budding, the grass was renewing the carpet of spring on the lawns, and on the mountain slopes the violets and lilies of the valley were in bloom.

The town is situated on the shores of the deep bay called Golden Horn and covers also the peninsula of Egersheld. On Russian Island opposite the town looms the fortress over which the enormous guns bend curiously their threatening muzzles.

The town, with its more solid element of brick buildings and its minor scattering of wooden ones, climbs in terraces toward the meteorologic station on the summit of the mountain called "Eagle's Nest." The official houses, the buildings of the railroad, the shops, banks, and barracks occupy the first terrace.

Above the official and European part of the town comes the Japanese quarter, living its own original life brought over from the Land of the Rising Sun.

Further on, behind the mountain, was a human rubbish heap; hovels half hidden in the earth, broken fences, ruined roofs, and whole streams of stinking mud flowing from the streets and corners. People swarmed like rats in these places. Garbed in white or pink cotton trousers

and short coats, with hair strangely dressed in a little knot and covered with a horse-hair hat like a milliner's form in which it looked like a bird in its cage, with sunburnt, dirty, brown, nice faces, and a language coming from the throat sounding like the barking of a dog—these were Koreans, children of the Land of the Morning Calm. In this quarter, in these mole hills, in this labyrinth of muddy and dirty alleyways, on these heaps of refuse from the town, these strangers led a life quite separate from that of the other inhabitants and beyond the law. Only at times, when an epidemic of cholera, small-pox, or plague raged, the Russian authorities ordered all Koreans to leave the district of the fortress and, on pain of severe punishment, obliged them to go, hungry and cold, in the direction of the Korean frontier, to the banks of the river Tumen. The town was set on fire, as this was the strongest disinfectant; and, after a year, over the burnt refuse and ruins of the hovels, a new town raised itself and new Korean inhabitants led the same life, occupied with theft, fortune-telling, catching of fish and crabs, and with maintaining opium dens as well as secret dwelling places for criminals of every description. The police hesitated to go in its labyrinth of twisted streets where danger lurked round every corner.

Such was this Korean suburb. A whole gang of robbers, who plagued Vladivostok even in daytime, attacking the shops and banks and openly capturing rich citizens to hold them for ransom, always had their dens here, inaccessible to the police and tribunals.

When the war between Russia and Japan began, I was in Vladivostok, and I know that underground mines

destined to blow up two important Russian forts were made in the Korean quarter and all the spies on whose trails the police began working, disappeared in the crowds of these white-robed, mysterious, silent sons of the Land of the Morning Calm.

Tales of this Korean suburb reached me the first day of my stay in Vladivostok.

A magnificent moon lighted the bay and the hill. The stars, apparently just above the sea and the mountain, shone brilliantly. When my friends suggested that I take a stroll to the hill above the town to see the beautiful panorama of the sea at night, I put in my pocket the Mauser which never leaves me in my travels and climbed up the streets that led to the higher terraces. Soon I came out among detached houses and afterwards hovels made of box boards and other scrap material. Finally, even these receded, as I climbed the grass-covered slopes of the mountain whose summit was covered with a growth of young trees, twisted and stunted by winds and fogs.

From here I had a magnificent view. At my feet lay the town, bright with the electric lights of the houses and the streets, and droning with its voice of continuous bustle and mingled sounds. Farther on, the dark bay, and on it the multi-colored lights of the ships with the long rows of bright portholes on the passenger liners and on the terrible white cruisers; the dark outlines of Russian Island with scattered and almost invisible lights on the forts; a sheaf of bright rays from the lighthouse on the rocky island of Skriploff appearing and disappearing; while behind the black mass of this rock island, the sea reigned powerfully and without partage.

As I was absorbing the pleasure of this canvas which night had prepared for me, a deep hoarse voice, disclosing a long-standing sympathy for alcohol, suddenly hauled me out of my dreams and rudely drove off my finer thoughts.

"Please give something to a dismissed official," were the words that ushered into my presence an immense man with a knotted cudgel in his hand and a soiled official cap on his head. I was quite familiar with this type of drunkard unable to work and live normally. They are the so-called "bare-footed men." When I drew out some small silver and gave it to him, he smiled ironically and, making the coins which shone in the moonlight dance in his palm, he mumbled:

"Only a few coins for me when I can have everything?"

At the same time he began fingering his heavy stick. Without speaking I drew my Mauser, from my pocket, looked at it and returned it to its regular place of concealment.

"Oh, excuse me," he said with a military salute. "That is the way you should have begun your talk. Good night to you, Sir!"

He walked away with shuffling, swaying gait, twirling his stick, but from time to time looking around, visibly afraid of the one-eyed Mauser which could transfix his back. He was one of those who lived as animals in the mole hills of the Korean suburb and only at night went out for food and booty.

The population of Vladivostok was an ethnographic puzzle and was a mixture of widely divergent moral ideas and convictions. It was composed of Russian of-

ficials who drank and made fortunes by exacting bribes or who found their way to prison; of drinking and card-playing officers; speculating merchants; small industrial operators using and abusing the cheap labor unprotected by any laws; of banditti; of slave traders, counterfeiters, blackmailers, of beings without any profession or with all sorts of professions from banditry to strangely regularized money making; of the scum of all countries and nations among whom one could find recruits for any adventure or expedition to look for gold on the shores of the Okhotsk Sea, to go a-sealing to the Commander Islands to barter with the natives of Kamchatka and Anadyr, where a glass of brandy and half a pound of wet rifle powder were the price of a sable or beaver skin.

This population, dubious from the standpoint of morality, was the ground on which was delineated the primitive story of the town. During the first years of its history it was a small Russian fortress near which hid itself a little town with bars, suspicious restaurants, gambling dens, and all the social parasites that are the bane of frontier life.

After a time, new personalities appeared on the scene: two German mariners, fugitives from a ship; a Dutchman followed by the law; a Swede and a Finn, stranded here on the Pacific shores by Fate. A Russian, probably a fugitive from *katorga,* joined them soon and together they opened a little shop with vodka, tobacco, wine, matches, candles, sardines, and rope, as their principal lines of merchandise. The shop was of no importance *per se,* but the owners became rich with lightning speed, buying property and erecting stately houses on what are now the leading streets of the town.

For the sources of this success one had to look outside the shop and even outside the town. This gang of enterprising adventurers carried on their business on the open sea, running several small but fast and well-armed sailers with which they attacked small Japanese, Chinese, and American ships engaged in carrying furs, ginseng, spring-deer antlers, gold and other goods bought or stolen within the boundaries of the Russian Far East. All this spoil was hidden in safe places until it could be sold. This lucrative business of the international group of adventurers continued for several years and raised its promoters to honorable positions in the town, so that finally they were able to abandon their activities on the sea and busy themselves with perhaps less profitable but entirely legal enterprises.

When a courageous Attorney-General instituted an investigation into the past of these potentates of the Far East, he paid with his life for this boldness. He was invited to a deer hunt and was shot through the head by accident! With his death ended the efforts to shed a purifying light on the dark past of these "honorable citizens." Some of them were still living when I arrived in Vladivostok. Everyone kowtowed to them, but behind their backs whispered the bloody details of their lives and of their activities along the Pacific shores.

CHAPTER XI

A RIDE WITH A TIGER

IN the spring I began my excursions through the country. During Easter time with a group of hunters I explored two islands situated near the shores of the promontory Muravieff-Amurski in the Bay of Peter the Great, Record and Putiatin.

The first of them belonged to a Hunting Club which had made a deer preserve of it. The island was overgrown with an exceedingly rich and abundant growth of grass greatly esteemed by the deer. Hundreds of roe deer have a shelter on the island, and, what is strange, they never leave it, although the sea freezes and leaves them ready access to the continent. Fortunately for the hunters, they not only remain, but others cross to the island, evidently attracted by the abundance of the forage.

Once a year a big hunt with hounds is held by the Club, but only roe deer are killed as the Club wishes to keep on Record as well as on Askold Island all the Axis deer possible.

After the Easter holidays I visited Putiatin Island where I found the family of a Polish colonist named Yankowski, whose father had been exiled to Siberia as a revolutionary after Poland's attempt to gain her freedom in 1863. He had developed here an excellent establish-

ment, breeding race-horses, cultivating the soil, and maintaining kitchen and fruit gardens. He had a daughter and two sons.

The daughter, sixteen years old, was a very courageous girl who rode wild steeds and lassoed horses from the herds with all the daring and skill of a cowboy. I saw her saddle a horse that had never before been ridden and, mounting it, disappear like the wind down the plain to return in a hour's time with her foam-covered steed docile and quiet.

The sons of Yankowski were strong rugged boys with enormous shoulders and breasts and eyes that sparkled with merriment and courage. It was easy to see that already in their short lives they knew the meaning of adventure and that they would not hide from danger. It was recounted to us how, during attacks of pirates and *hunghutzes* on the island, they fought by the side of their elders and helped to repulse the enemy, but of this they themselves would tell nothing, which was proof not only of their modesty but also of their moral value. I spent a day on Putiatin Island, inspecting with much pleasure Yankowski's stud and his racing-stable and investigating the layers of excellent China clay or kaoline.

Some days after my return to Vladivostok, I learned that one of the Yankowski boys had barely escaped death the day after my visit.

Saddling their horses and taking their guns to hunt duck, they went through the forest in the direction of the seashore where many ducks and geese stopped during their northward flight in spring. As the road was narrow and twisted like a snake among the thick bushes, the boys were riding Indian file when the younger one, who

was behind, espied a fox which disappeared at once in the brush. Rising in the stirrups, the boy had stopped his horse and was carefully looking round in the hope of a shot at the animal, when he heard a terrifying roar followed by the cries of his brother. Urging his horse to a gallop he soon reached a small forest meadow and saw before him a wild and terrible picture. With the horse going at full gallop, his brother lay bent backward on the animal's rump. A tiger, with one paw fastened on the boy's right shoulder, was being dragged along, scratching the earth and bushes and unable, through the speed they were going, to get his third paw up into the horse's thigh.

The little Yankowski lashed his mount and overtook the struggling group. The elder brother began already to be faint, as the tiger was hanging with nearly all his weight on the boy's shoulder from which the blood was flowing and spattering them all. The younger brother rode up close to the tiger and, when the beast turned to him his savage head, shot it in the ear with his revolver. The animal let go his hold on horse and rider and slid inertly to the ground where the youngster put some more bullets through its head before turning to help his brother. Both he and the horse had received serious wounds and lost a great deal of blood. Assisting his brother to dismount, he dressed the wounds with bands torn from his shirt and brought him home. Then, taking a helper with him, he returned to the place of the struggle, skinned the tiger, and came back with his trophy.

Such are these young men brought up in close contact with nature, living through such hardy adventures and

continuous dangers which demand courage, strength of will and presence of mind. However hard, it is the best school for that youth on which the fate, happiness and greatness of nations must depend.

CHAPTER XII

THE ROBBED SEA AND THE BLOODY TRAIL

ONCE during my studies of coal and gold deposits I was obliged to visit Possiet Bay and its port Nijegorodski harbor, situated in the southern part of the Ussúrian country near the Russo-Korean frontier.

Novokiyevsk, a small military town with a garrison and several officers, lies on the shore of this bay. At one time it was intended to erect a fortress here for the defence of the country from the south, but this was not done and there remained only this solitary little town in the bay where people became drunkards, lost everything playing cards, ended their lives by suicide, and thus tried to get some enjoyment in such a strange fashion, that I must sacrifice a whole chapter to tell about them.

The town is surrounded by a very thick forest and is close to the Korean frontier. Here and there the *fang-tzu* or houses of hunters, principally Chinese, are to be met. Small mail boats ply between Vladivostok and the town, carrying few passengers since from the commercial and industrial standpoint this place had no importance and attracts nobody.

However, one can see in the forest surrounding the town, numerous trails and strange buildings, low hovels hidden among the undergrowth and half buried in the earth with log roofs covered with grass and bushes. I

was told that they are *zasidki*—that is, blinds for hunting beasts and birds. The officer, Popoff, who went out shooting with me, when speaking of the *zasidki,* smiled and said:

"These are ambushes for the White Swans. Our Cossacks built them some time ago, but they use them now, though much more rarely."

At the time I asked for no further details, however much astonished I was that the Cossacks should lie in wait for swans in the forest rather than on the lake shore. Some days later I received an answer to my unphrased question in quite an unexpected fashion.

I visited the shores of Possiet Bay and cruised the bay itself in a small military steamer. I was astonished to see no tokens of life, even none of the seaweed which grows so abundantly in all the bays of the Japan Sea. The captain of the ship explained this to me in tones of undisguised bitterness.

"You know how our Government handles state business! Five years ago it granted the Japanese a concession for fishing in the bay. They caught all the fish, with the help of divers took all the seaweed, oysters, and crabs from the bottom, and left the place an aquatic wilderness to which the fish come no more. If you care to see for yourself, I shall give you a diver's suit and you can have a walk on the bottom of the bay."

His tale made me curious, so that I accepted his offer. Near the town the captain stopped the ship and ordered a boat with a pump and a diver's apparatus to be lowered I crawled into the India-rubber suit with its thick lead-soled boots and let them fasten over my head the diver's helmet and then climbed down the ladder into the water.

A second diver went down from the opposite side of the boat. Once on the bottom I began looking about me, carefully treading on the quaggy soil of the bay. In the soft greenish twilight, I made out water-logged planks and bits of iron; further on an anchor with a piece of a chain half buried in the mud; rusted petroleum and conserve tins, broken bottles, rags and ropes strewn in different directions: but I saw nowhere traces of life. The bottom was quite bare. I saw no seaweed, no fish, no sea anemones or medusas nor even shells. It was truly a waste, abandoned by live beings as though it were a plague-stricken country. It was a sad and desolate sight. I pulled the rope and was soon again on deck where I was stripped of my diver's costume.

"Well, is it a gay landscape?" the captain asked with irony.

When I told him of the impression it made, the mariner sadly bent his head and turned away.

The road to the Korean frontier passed quite close to Novokiyevsk through the foothills of the Sikhota-Alin with their covering of leafy forests. But nobody traveled on this road; it was of stragetic importance but was never generally used, as there were other, secret trails followed by the white-robed Koreans, returning to their melancholy land from the Ussurian country where they gained lawfully and unlawfully the means of existence for themselves and their families who were often alone for many years.

One day when I went shooting with some officers near the Korean frontier, we had as our guides Cossacks from Nikolsk-Ussuriski and from the Cossack guard villages along the frontier. We were hunting roe deer, whole

herds of which fed on the mountain slopes in the high grass and thick bushes.

While following some deer which fled up the mountains through a thicket of young oaks, I perceived behind some rocks a black form. Supposing at first it was a man, I shouted loudly to warn him, as he might easily be shot. As no answer was forthcoming, I was making in his direction when I heard a loud roar and saw a big black bear jump out and shuffle down the mountain slope to the bottom of the ravine. I could see the bushes bending under the weight of the beast, but could not follow its form.

I was about to give chase when a shot cracked and the echo repeated it farther and farther in the mountains. Then I saw one of our Cossack guides calling to another to lend him a hand in skinning the bear. On approaching them I found that the bear had been shot through the heart and that the Cossacks were already skinning it.

In the thick grass near the fallen beast, I remarked some white rags and some remains of rotten, yellow cotton wool. Noticing my look the Cossacks began to laugh.

"A White Swan passed here, and I overtook him," chuckled an old Cossack as he deftly skinned the bear. "It was two years ago. With my cousin, a Cossack from Iman, I came here to look for White Swans as I knew that lots of them wander this way."

"What do you mean by White Swans?" I asked.

"Koreans, Sir, Koreans," he replied gaily. "They come from the Amur gold mines, the Sungacha, the Mai Ho, and Imperator Bay, and carry on their backs a lot of precious things: gold dust, *panti*, ginseng, amber, mush-

rooms, river pearls, sables, ermine, and marten skins. And how could we allow them to take all this when it would be of good use to us Christians?"

And they laughed again.

"How do you do this?" I inquired, guessing the truth.

"It is a very simple thing. We arrange *zasidki* on the roads and just wait. The Koreans travel singly as they distrust one another, and skulk along the smallest trails. When the Cossacks hear the noise of steps or an axe or see at night the glow of the fires on the tree-tops, they creep up on the White Swan and take from him what he has in his pack. Sometimes the Korean tries to defend himself with his axe or knife, and then a bullet quiets him for ever. If he weeps and curses, the Cossack kills him anyway; for what is life to a feelingless Swan? In any case he must die sooner or later."

The old Cossack told all this in a calm and sneering way, and I had no reason for disbelieving him, especially after seeing the rags, perhaps bloodstained, of the Korean costume and having run across some of these ambushes in the thicket.

"But it is a crime!" I remarked, looking straight at the Cossacks.

"Bah, what sort of a crime is it!" answered the young one. "Are these really men? They are reptiles, and they are as numerous as ants! Now such hunts are rare, as they begin to use railroads and ships and only the poorest ones wander through the forest. Besides, the authorities punish Cossacks and peasants with six months of prison for killing a White Swan and Cyril Fomenko got a whole year because a Consul made a claim. The

consul learned of the deed from Chinese who were on the trail and saw Fomenko when he was rifling the pack of the Swan. Previously, liberty reigned here, it was a paradise for a strong, bold man! But these times are no more. Now you go through the forest, and lo, the telegraph trails unseen, nobody knows where and what for. It is only, I suppose, to vex free men."

Both men heartily cursed this meddlesome discovery of civilization and, finishing their work with the bear, rejoined the hunt.

Soon we came upon a large meadow where we flushed a flock of pheasants. I did enjoy it! Every step put up from the grass or bushes mottled gray and brown hens or brilliant cocks, with their yellow, gold, gray, red, and iridescent blues and purples on neck and breast. I took many from the flock. It is easy to shoot a pheasant, as the bird starts with a whir and slowly rises to a height of thirty or forty feet, and then makes off in a straight line in a fast but even flight. Shooting pheasants becomes tedious unless it be in thick covert where one must have skill and quickness to get a good aim. This is especially true in the Ussurian country, where the number of pheasants is amazing. Two officers and myself hunting near Possiet Bay killed two hundred and seventy birds in one day.

Such is this hunter's paradise, where among the hunter's spoil one meets the White Swans, these unhappy Korean wanderers, who, having made what is for them a small fortune through ever dangerous work in the forest of the Ussuri or in the ravines of the Sikhota-Alin, return to their homeland, where the families long abandoned by fathers and husbands, lead lives of hardship

and sadness. Often in vain they wait for their men's return, in vain they hope for a future of wealth, as there near the Cossack ambushes on the forest trails, only some bloodstained rags and bones remain.

These thoughts weighed on my mind as I followed and crossed these Ussurian trails of the White Swans, who in springtime trekked north full of hope, and in autumn returned south only to enter the jaws of death at the hands of the European Russians bringing culture to the Far East.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TIGER CLUB

I SPENT some days in Novokiyevsk observing its life, living with the local military men. They were a strange lot, formed for the most part of officers sent here because of their misdeeds; for their squandering of government money, drinking, killing soldiers, or maltreating men in the barracks.

They were quite demoralized, fallen men, enjoying only brandy, cards, and moral degradation. For the most part they were single and, if an officer's family arrived, scandals, romances, and duels began at once. It only happened occasionally that normal men of good family and standing were ordered here. Their life was a continuous torture. They could not accustom themselves to the awful conditions of service and existence in the port and spent much of their time hunting, as the only healthful diversion, since there were no books, no society, and no other cultural pastimes. However, the majority, almost forgotten by their superiors and left in isolation here on the banks of the dead bay near the tragic Korean border, learned how to exist. A Homeric drunkenness, wild card playing, and continuous, frequently bloody brawls filled the life of these fallen men.

The Tiger Club was the best illustration of the abnormal life of these officers on the shores of Possiet

Bay. During my visit there, this club was obliged to meet in secret as the authorities would not tolerate it; but twenty years before it existed quite openly and its renown spread westward to the center of Siberia. It bore then the strange name of "The Society of the Lance-poops."

I heard the story of it from an old officer who had spent many years in Novokiyevsk.

"In the evening after a hard drinking bout, we used to meet in the casino, a dirty, dark barn saturated with the fumes of alcohol which were enough to make even a sober man become drunk as he entered this den. Habitual drinking made the men mad or melancholy and out of this grew the invention of a special pastime known as the 'Tiger Game.' The members of the club entered a room lighted by a single candle. The casting of lots divided the members into hunters and tigers, white for the hunters and red for the tigers. Then another drawing designated the first pair to begin the game. Of these two, the hunter received a revolver, the tiger a bell.

"The rest of the members took seats on the upper rungs of ladders set against the walls, leaving the floor to the hunter and tiger. When everything was ready, the servants entered, bringing big glasses of vodka for the observers and pure spirit or *arraka* for the contestants. When these 'cooling drinks' had been swallowed, the servants put out the candle and withdrew, carefully closing the door. The command: 'The hunt begins,' was given and the game commenced.

"The tiger crawled noiselessly in the darkness as the contestants' boots had been removed before the game. He hid in the corners of the room, sometimes lay down

or crawled along trying to outwit the ear and watchfulness of the hunter.

"Suddenly a sharp ringing of the bell would be heard, then a shot.

"Sometimes a dull sound of a falling body answered the shot, when the tiger was killed or wounded; sometimes a triumphant cry:

" 'You missed. Now you take the bell!'

"The players changed their rôles and the game continued until a hit was scored or a certain number of rounds finished. Often after such a night in the 'Tiger Club,' the morning patrols found on the shores of the bay tragic evidence of this incredible pastime. Although everybody knew exactly what befell these members of the Club, the official reports always read:

" 'An officer was found killed through careless handling of firearms.' "

The old officer who told me this tale sat silent for a while, ruminating over the years spent in the barracks of Novokiyevsk and then raised his head and mumbled:

"After all, this game was better than much of our life in the town and barracks there on Possiet Bay. It was a terrible existence."

He cursed under his breath and then relapsed into silence, puffing at his pipe.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RED GINSENG DEVIL

IT would be difficult, well-nigh impossible, for me to forget my expedition north of Vladivostok to make geological studies in search of coal and gold. A wild *taiga,* this Ussuri forest—a green ocean, a mixture of Northern and Southern flora. Here, on the farther bank of the Ussurian Bay, I found the silent, solitary ravines of the Middle Sikhota-Alin. Forest roads, winding and disappearing, led from *fang-tzu* to *fang-tzu* inhabited by Russian and Chinese hunters.

Often I entered these *fang-tzu,* sometimes received willingly and hospitably; but sometimes the owner of the hut, seeing me approach, left the house and hid in the bushes; and sometimes even a bullet from an invisible rifle sang above my head as a warning to avoid the dwelling of one not fond of human society.

One evening a light shone through the branches. I went in its direction and soon saw a little house made of logs chinked with clay. A stockade of poles with a heavy gate of crudely hewn planks surrounded this *fang-tzu* where I called for the gate to be opened and my Cossack guide pounded on it with the butt of his rifle. We finally heard some mumblings and dull, incomprehensible gruntings. The door slowly opened and a paper

lantern first appeared, followed by the thin, terrified face of a Chinese with big frightened eyes. His pigtail was twisted around his head and a pipe was thrust through the coils.

"*Ni liao tao* (How do you do)?" my Cossack greeted him in his best Chinese.

The man shook his head and muttered, but we could understand nothing, even though my guide spoke fluently the Manchurian dialect. The Chinese continued to mumble in a dull, toneless voice. Finally, he opened his mouth wide, holding the lantern near his face so that we saw his tongue was cut out and his front teeth broken.

The Cossack soon succeeded in understanding the cripple and told me that our host was a seeker of ginseng and that once he was attacked in his house here in the forest by *hunghutzes*. They ordered him to give them all he had of the precious root and, when he refused to comply with their demands, they began to torture him and finally cut out his tongue, but he did not disclose where he had hidden his precious roots. Explaining this with mumblings and gestures, the Chinese seemed to make clear to us that now after all his maiming he was afraid of nothing and would tell nobody, including ourselves, his secret.

We took up our quarters in his home and tried to be comfortable. We brought fresh grass for a good bed, unsaddled our horses and tied them under a little shed near the *fang-tzu*, carried water from the stream and began to prepare our supper. The Chinese, with suspicions allayed and relieved by the fact that we asked for nothing and treated him even to tobacco and sugar,

brought us a basket of pheasants' eggs and a bunch of sea cabbage.

After supper and tea, which he took with us, he became more communicative. He mumbled more quickly and loudly, making gestures with his hands and looking round into all corners of the room. Finally, he disappeared for a moment into some sort of hole and returned with an enigmatic face. When he neared the *kang* (the Chinese flue-heated brick bed) he held something in one hand covering it with the second. In the light of our candle he placed on the *kang* two big, strangely-formed brown roots, their shape distinctively resembling that of the human body, with head, torso, feet, and hands. Even long matted hair grew on the head. The Cossack, an expert in these things, carefully inspected the roots and said afterwards with a sad sigh:

"In Vladivostok or Habarevsk one could get twice its weight in gold for this ginseng, as these are particularly valuable, old, healthy roots."

I inferred from his sigh and his regretful, meditative expression that, had I not been there, the dumb Chinese would have to undergo new tortures and would be forced to reveal where he hid this treasure, so sought for in the East.

At midnight, a second ginseng hunter, the partner of the cripple, came in. He was a giant, with a severe, almost terrible face, with broad shoulders and the powerful neck of a bear. When he moved about the room he shook the whole establishment. He stopped before us and, after scrutinizing us, with his eyes questioned his dumb partner. The answer visibly pleased him, as he put his rifle in one corner, took his axe from his belt

and, giving us a side glance, took from his pocket a little leather bag and gave it to his companion, who turned to the light and quickly untied the bag, gloating over the spoil. Evidently it was good, for he mumbled joyfully and clapped his hands like a child. The giant undressed wearily, swallowed some millet gruel and tea, and, loudly groaning, flung himself on the *kang*. Soon he was snoring like a pig, while the dumb one had once more disappeared in his hole and remained there a long time. I had the impression that I heard the noise of rolling stones and the dull rattle of iron; but perhaps it was a dream only, as I did not remember when the poor cripple returned.

We were up at dawn and had our tea with dry bread and biscuits. The giant, always grunting and terribly tired, proved to be talkative and sociable. He spoke Russian fairly well, as he had been a "boy" in Vladivostok for several years. I must say that I thought that he must have done considerable damage, as I pictured to myself this servant with the body of an elephant and the neck of a bear serving dinner, polishing Baccarat glassware or ironing fine linen.

"Our work is difficult and dangerous," he said, drinking his tea and wincing over the pains in his feet. "To find the root one must wander through forest and over mountains almost on one's knees, as the plant is small and hides in the thickest grass. Finally, when you have found the treasured root, you must carefully dig away each inch of earth. At the same time you must beware of the big she-cat (tiger) which, as well as the panther, also hunts for ginseng. The root gives strength and long life, and this is why these animals seek it and eat it.

And when they see it in the possession of a man or a bear, they begin to fight for it and never will retreat until they get it or are killed. It is already six years that I have wandered through the *taiga*, during which time I have killed nine tigers and two panthers, to say nothing of the bears brought down. I am not afraid of the great she-cat, for when I killed the first one, which attacked me on the Mai Ho in a meadow where the roots grew, I ate its heart and liver. But the most terrible of all is the devil who guards the ginseng. He is small and red with burning eyes. In the daytime he protects the roots by blinding the hunter; at night he sets fire to the grass and attaches himself to the breast of the hunter, sucking his blood."

"Have you seen him?" I asked.

"No, but old Fu-chiang saw him twice and his whole breast is scratched by the devil's nails," answered the giant. "It also happens that the devil takes the form of the ginseng root, which appears before the hunter; and when he approaches it, the root retreats farther and farther until the man loses his way and perishes in the forest. A similar experience happened to me last year. I was in a ravine looking for the indented leaves of the miraculous plant when suddenly I espied a big leaf and small red flowers like flamelets. The root ought to have been very old. I came nearer, but could not reach it, as the distance to it remained always the same. I followed it into the woods until finally the leaf and flowers disappeared. I looked about everywhere but could discover nothing. As it was almost evening, I wanted to return to the *fang-tzu* but could not make out the way. After wandering till midnight, I sat down, tired and sore,

under a tree and was about to fall asleep when I heard some one tramping loudly through the forest. At the time I had no rifle, only an axe, but with this I made ready. Suddenly, I saw a bear sniffing about. He raised his head and looked at me, advanced quite near to me, looked in my eyes and turned and went away. I understood that he called me and so I followed him and he led me to our stream from where I easily found my way back to our *fang-tzu.* Yes, *Ta-jen* (Sir), in the *taiga* one can see many strange things."

He raised up with a groan, stretched his huge limbs till the joints cracked, put his rifle on his shoulder, tied his knife and shovel to his belt where already an axe was lodged, and went out. I remarked that as food for the whole day he took only two little *man-t'ou,* small Chinese steamed bread in the form of dumplings.

CHAPTER XV

I LEAVE IT TO THE TIGER

I SAW other *fang-tzu* of hunters. They rarely used rifles, employing instead all sorts of traps and snares.

Sables, martens, and polecats are caught in snares of which there are two ordinary types: a common net and a trap, very primitive, but based on an intimate knowledge of animals' habits. The hunt takes place in winter only when the trail is easily found in the snow. Following the tracks, the hunters search out the nest of the sables or martens in hollow, standing trees. A hunting dog, called *chow-chow* from the breed of hairy wolves with pointed ears and black tongue which it resembles, barks and scratches the tree trunk. Anxious and curious, the sable immediately comes out on a branch to study the situation. Then the Chinese cut down the trees which are near and to which the victim can spring. After this the tree trunk is surrounded with nets spread on upright stakes and the *battue* commences. The Chinese frighten the inhabitant of the hole, striking the tree trunk with their axes, shouting and throwing against the upper trunk bits of bark and stones. The sable mounts to the summit of the tree but, continually frightened by the noise, returns to the hole to quit it again almost immediately. This game lasts for some time until the despairing animal runs along a limb

or the trunk to jump off on the ground and escape, but only falls into the nets which collapse and entangle it, rendering it an easy prey to the *coup de grâce* of the hunter.

The traps used to catch these animals are very simple. The sable, not liking to sink or wallow in the snow, tries always to travel on the trees; and, if its way be long, over fallen trunks and rocks. Knowing its habits, the hunters place on these runways a trap consisting of a plank supported at one end by a light spindle and weighted with heavy stones. The sable going along the fallen tree and meeting the obstacle, does not jump off into the snow, but tries to force his way through between the plank and the tree trunk, which moves the spindle and drops the plank. Martens and polecats are trapped in the same way except for the addition of a bait, usually a tied, live bird.

Deer and elk are taken in autumn in the so-called *solanki,* that is, places where salt is spread for them. The hunters find and burn off in the wood a rather large meadow, leaving no bushes or grass. During the whole summer they salt the place, so that the animals get in the habit of coming to this lick. When the game is used to the place and comes often, deep pits are dug there in the autumn and are covered with branches and above these earth mixed with salt is strewn. The deer or elk fall through the light covering into the pits, where the hunters can easily despatch them.

The brown prince of the forest, the bear, is also caught in such pits, lured there by carrion and impaled in its fall on sharpened stakes.

Strange to say the tiger never can be taken in such a trap. It will circle about it, but will always in time scent the work of its enemy, man, and will turn away from the

temptation and danger. The Chinese hunt it with the rifle, and willingly go after it as the Chinese physicians pay a high price for the heart and liver of the tiger, and the *shamans* of different tribes living in the forest also pay well for the nails and teeth of this master of the *taiga* for use in making amulets.

One time, while investigating the deposits of lignite along the Mai Ho, I came across a *fang-tzu* of Russian hunters. There were two of them and they had two well-trained dogs. I arrived just on the eve of an expedition they were planning against a tiger, numerous traces of which they had found in the neighboring forest.

"It must be a fearless, powerful beast," one of the hunters told me, "as at night it jumped over the fence around a Cossack's house, seized a cow and jumped back over the fence with it. It was evident that the cow slipped off the tiger's back on to the fence, as the points of the fence boards were marked with bits of skin and hair, but it got away with it just the same. That was a week ago. The tiger disappeared, but now it has returned. Day before yesterday it captured two dogs. With God's help, we shall go tomorrow and kill it."

Having seen my Henel rifle with a telescope on it and my big Mauser in its wooden sheath, they invited me to join them in the hunt. I accepted the invitation and was off with them the following morning at dawn. It was autumn, and the forest was glorious in its red and gold as in a festive garment. We traveled along a little road among thick bushes growing on soft ground. Suddenly the dogs stopped, sniffing and anxiously cocking their ears. I saw my companions look around, their fingers on the triggers; but the dogs quieted down and went into

the covert. After some minutes they stopped again and, with noses glued to the earth, seemed to be petrified statues. The hunters examined the ground and soon found the place where the beast had lain down. The grass was trampled and in it we found the limb of a tree carrying the marks of a large and powerful claw. The dogs carefully advanced, but soon stopped again. Now I saw on the ground a deep print of the tiger's paw with the traces of the claw distinct and fresh.

"He must be near," whispered one of the hunters.

Both of them continually kept looking in all directions and nervously turning round. Afterwards I learned that when a tiger finds he is being pursued, he works around behind the hunter and attacks in the rear.

The behavior of the men unnerved and frightened me. They were young and evidently inexperienced and I frankly regretted having gone with them. Suddenly from the thick grass came the whining of the dogs; then they both slunk back to us with their tails between their legs, trembling and afraid, and huddled up against us with terror in their eyes. My companions bolted, calling me as they ran.

With difficulty I held myself there for a few seconds and then—may the Fates blot out the record!—overtook them very quickly. With wind exhausted by the run we slowed down and trudged along silently. Even the dogs comprehended the gravity of the situation and followed us with lowered heads.

"It was terrible!" mumbled one of the hunters.

"Yes, very terrible!" the second acquiesced.

"One tiger is quite enough," continued the first "and there were two of them."

"How do you know that there were two of them?" I asked in a cross voice.

"Did you not see the tracks of two tigers?" he asked. "A pair must be near."

"Fear made you see double," I blurted out.

"If a man meets such a pair of devils, he will see double sure enough," he answered. "We did not see double, Sir, for there were certainly two tigers. They lay in wait among the bushes and in the grass and, as the dogs did not even bark but turned tail and fled, the tigers were surely advancing on them from two sides."

"Oh, it was terrible, terrible!" sighed the second tiger slayer, looking around.

I was about to poke fun at him, but I recalled the meadow covered with the yellowed grass and golden oak bushes, the momentary, ominous silence broken by the whining of the frightened dogs, the feeling of impending danger, lurking and overpowering, and those tracks of the master of the forest, as large as a plate and framed with the prints of his enormous claws. I recalled all this and withheld my banter from these companions with whom after all I had also returned so precipitously from the attack of the tigers.

I was rankled and ashamed for a long time afterwards whenever I recalled this hunt; but later on I was somewhat reconciled when a well-known hunter, Professor N. I. Kartaszof, Director of the Tomsk Polytechnic Institute, confessed to me how he had also broken and run during a tiger hunt.

Other hunters told me also that to hunt this terrible beast of prey among thick bushes where it is difficult to see and from where it always has the advantage of

favorable attack on the hunter, often frightens even the most courageous. Only one doughty individual told another tale and of him I shall sing a pæon later on.

This same autumn I visited the bays of St. Olga, St. Vladimir and Tetiukho. These are among the most alluring spots for capitalists on the Primorsk coast, as here are to be found the richest deposits of iron, copper, zinc, and coal. The Germans in these regions were very active commercially before and after the Russo-Japanese War and would have certainly possessed all of these natural riches, had it not been for the World War. The personnel changed after the Great War, and Japanese began to arrive. It was said sneeringly in the Far East that:

"Saints Olga and Vladimir sent the Japanese to help Russia against the Bolsheviks."

It was true, for the Japanese having at home little of the iron ore so much needed for military and industrial purposes, could nowhere on the continent find it so accessible as in the bays of St. Olga and St. Vladimir; and this was one of the dominating reasons why the Japanese Army and Japanese diplomats remained in Vladivostok and Nikolaievsk on the Amur and fought the bands of Red Partisans, or negotiated with Ataman Semenoff, an irreconcilable foe of the Soviets, or had conferences in Dairen with representatives of the Bolshevik administration from Moscow or of the poorly veiled communistic government at Chita.

These riches are almost inexhaustible and the ores are of a very high grade. The metallurgic industry has here a possible field of activity for at least a hundred and fifty years. To snatch this enormous wealth it was worth

while for the Tokio Government to talk, to fight, and to override the large element of popular opposition to its militaristic policy in Siberia among the Japanese people themselves.

CHAPTER XVI

A DRAMA OF SIKHOTA-ALIN

TRAVELING over the Ussurian country, I visited not only the lonely *fang-tzu* of Chinese and Russian solitary seekers of the mysterious ginseng and of gold, and of hunters of sables, martens, deer, and bear, but also villages, for the most part those of Cossacks and Ukrainian peasants transplanted here from the shores of the Dnieper and the Dniester. These villages, if they lie far off the railway uniting Vladivostok and Habarovsk, are usually a collection of from twenty to fifty houses scattered over a large area with considerable distances between them.

In these hamlets, lost in the forest and on the banks of rapid mountain streams, life is quite different from that in those nearer the railway and the big towns. Strange laws and a peculiar morality, distinct influences of the Mongolian nomads, reign here cramped by no formal regulations. Often tragic life dramas are enacted against this background.

I was once witness to such a drama during a horseback trip from the Tchernigoff station to the shores of Tetiukho Bay.

Our road traversed forests and crossed the central part of the principal Sikhota-Alin range. When we were thirty-five miles from the seashore, a young Cossack over-

took us on his way home for four weeks' leave from his service with the frontier guard in Manchuria to recuperate from a severe wound he had received in a fight with the *hunghutzes*. He was pale and thin; he had fever and spat blood; in his wide and staring eyes a strange, continuous fear seemed lurking. This silent young Cossack was doomed to an early death. He traveled with us some days and gradually became more communicative with me, perhaps because I doctored him a little, giving him quinine and, in the night when he could not sleep, some valerian drops.

He told me that for three years he had not been to the home for which he longed and with emotion he spoke of his picturesque village scattered among the oak trees along the shore of a rapid, deep river full of whirlpools and holes. He especially dwelt on the description of a small lake framed in reeds with beautiful "cat-tails" which seemed made of velvet.

"Oh, if you could see this lake," said he with enthusiasm, "it is beautiful, especially on moonlight nights. When one sits on the high bank among the cork oaks and looks down on it, sleeping in the moonlight, it appears to be of silver. Sometimes black circles and lines begin to course its shining surface. These are made by the swirl of a fish or by the splash of a belated duck, troubling the polished expanse of molten silver. How beautiful it is!"

Looking into the pale face and dreamy eyes of the Cossack I smiled and asked:

"Surely you were not alone when you sat and watched the silver lake?"

He bent his head, and, after a moment of silence, whispered:

"I went there with my betrothed. I love this girl more than life. When I left home she swore she would wait for me. Now I have only one year more of service; then I shall come back and marry her."

"Heaven grant you happiness!" said I.

The country between the Ussuri railway and the Sikhota-Alin range is interesting from the historic and ethnographic standpoint. A high culture once existed here, probably Korean. The people from the Hermit Kingdom were once courageous and powerful; but, having more warlike and enterprising neighbors, the Japanese and Chinese, they were conquered, lost their culture and liberty and now, even their country. I came across in the forest, ruins of walls and ditches, stone foundations of great buildings already crumbled to pieces, perhaps of temples, palaces, or fortresses. Remnants of the ancient sculptural art of those times occurred in places in the form of immense granite tortoises six or eight feet high, some of them having on their backs engravings representing birds, flowers, and other ornaments.

Once life moved nobly here as was evidenced by traces of fine roads, now overgrown by woods. These roads were even paved with cobbles and had well-constructed stone bridges, of which I found remnants on the Daobi Ho and on another small rapid stream whose name I did not learn. Now everywhere was only a wild, solitary forest. I did not even find isolated *fang-tzu,* but saw many herds of deer and *kabarga* (*Gazella Cabarga musca*) or musk antelope.

We also came across traces of a *barse* or northern panther, as we found the body of a deer with a torn throat which indicated by its warmth that we had evi-

dently just frightened the beast of prey. The spoor of the plunderer were fresh around the catch, seeing which the Cossacks decided unanimously that it was a panther, the terror of deer, horses, and cattle. Following the spoor, we came finally to a place where they disappeared.

"It has gone up a tree," said the elder of our guides.

We looked all through the branches of the oaks and cedars near-by but could not detect the beast. Studying all the trees along the road, we had made at least a mile when we espied a dark object which sprang from a tree, dropped and ran across a little forest glade, and with amazing quickness climbed a solitary oak. The Cossacks unslung their rifles and sped on ahead while I followed immediately, making ready my Henel. The sick Cossack was the first under the tree, and, without dismounting, aimed at the panther and shot. The beast of prey fell from the tree like a heavy sack, shot through the head. It was a dark-brown, fine big specimen with yellow spots all over the body, which was forty inches in length. The head was disproportionately large and the tail very long.

"That was a good shot," said I to the Cossack.

"I belong to the company of mounted sharpshooters," he answered proudly. "Only those who shoot very well are appointed to it; and we continually hunt big game in the forests of northern Manchuria, so that I have had some practice."

The Cossacks quickly skinned the panther and I purchased the pelt for ten roubles for the museum.

When we came to the village of the sick Cossack, I found myself obliged to spend three days there, as my horse had just strained its leg, which was swelling badly.

I used this time to hunt, for on the lake so poetically described by the Cossack, I found large flocks of duck that gave me wonderful sport.

I stopped in the house of the *ataman* of the village and at first did not see my traveling companion as he lived at the further end of the village nearly two miles away and I was roaming all day long with my gun along the shores of the lake or beside the numerous streams near-by. One day when it was already after sundown, I was returning home very tired after having hunted all day long. I seated myself on a stone among the bushes on the bank of a stream and decided to rest a while inasmuch as I was still an hour from home.

When I was about to resume my walk, I heard steps and voices on the opposite bank of the stream and so remained quiet and listened. I made out a woman's voice, sad, trembling with stifled sobs, interrupting frequently the deeper, strongly moved tones of a man. The voices came nearer and finally passed close to me along the path just within the bushes on the farther bank and leading to the lake.

The woman was speaking in a low, hopelessly sad voice.

"I did not dare to protest . . . my stepmother ordered me to marry and I did so not to be a burden any longer at home. We were so poor, so poor and so miserable."

"But you took your oath you would wait for me," the man burst out and began coughing violently. "You took your oath!"

"I took my oath," answered the woman as an echo.

"Yes," sneeringly laughed the man, "and what came of your oath? You fooled me. You married. And whom? My own father! Yes, I understand all! He is

rich and has an open hand for his young wife. . . . And I . . . a poor soldier, a beggar. . . . How you wronged me! . . . I have no words to express my suffering and misery. I am even afraid to speak as it would be in words of hate and in curses!"

The woman said something more, but I could not hear it, as they passed farther on and the wind was rustling the reeds and bushes. I looked out from my shelter from where, without any intention on my part, I had overheard this sad conversation of two unhappy souls and in the man I recognized my fellow-traveler, the Cossack, who, after his recovery from the severe wound, had returned home for rest and . . . love.

The next day a feeling of anxious curiosity compelled me to go to see him. I found him in the yard, busy about a wagon wheel. He brightened on seeing me but was soon again in a brown study. He invited me to take tea, which is the traditional Siberian and Asiatic way of receiving a guest. As we entered the house, peasant richness was evident everywhere. Heavy boxes containing all sorts of family articles stood near the walls and the table was covered with a clean, embroidered cloth. In the right corner hung several ikons of the saints on silver, with the traditional small lamp burning before them day and night and adorned with brightly colored paper flowers. A big looking-glass and several prints in black frames hung on the walls. The floor of polished planks, the table and the benches all shone with cleanliness. It was quite patent that life in this home was ordered and normal. The open door of the second room disclosed rugs of home manufacture on the floor and walls and a large bed with a pyramid of pillows, beginning with an

immense one and crowned with a small one fit for a doll's cradle, so high that the topmost nearly reached the low ceiling of cedar planks. Many rifles, revolvers, sabers, and hunting knives adorned the walls, the best proof that the house belonged to a Cossack, as they of this military caste love weapons of all sorts and carefully collect and keep them in their homes. Before Bolshevism, this caste had its military traditions beautified by an heroic epos, the half-legendary, half-true story of the Cossacks who came from the banks of the Don and the Donetz to the Irtysh near the Sayans, to Lake Baikal, the Amur and the Ussuri, urged by their warlike instincts.

Entering the house, the young Cossack called his family. In a moment a young woman came in, thin, with glossy black hair and dark brown eyes. The paleness of her face and the bitter lines near her full, nicely moulded lips, attracted my attention. She wore a dark dress, and her fingers held her apron in a nervous, ever-changing grasp. Once in the room, she gave the young Cossack a look full of pain and terror.

"It is she," I thought, "she, who promised to wait for the young son, but meanwhile married the old father."

Soon the old host came from the forest. He was an immense bulky-framed man with thick, gray hair and eyes full of gaiety and life. He greeted me gravely and asking me to the table, said with a disagreeable sneer:

"Thank you, Sir, for doctoring this starveling. Nowadays people are very feeble. Such wounds were of no importance in my time. I had two such holes in my breast during the Turkish war and a bullet in my leg, and you see I am quite all right now."

He laughed loudly and added:

"I am young, younger than my son, and this is why I married last year for the second time. I suppose my son spoke proudly to you of having such a father?"

"I congratulate you," I answered, "but I did not hear of your marriage from him. However, I think that you had not such holes as this made by the Chinese bullet in the young man's breast. It is a serious wound that will heal very slowly and he must be careful about his health for a long time."

During the meal I remarked that the old man looked spitefully and suspiciously at his silent young wife and at the sad, emaciated face of his son. I was frightened by these vicious lights in the gay, active eyes of the old Cossack and I felt and understood that just a little more provocation would be sufficient to wake a ferocious beast in the heart of this gray giant. It was clear also that physically the father was much stronger than the son, so deadly wronged by him. It was less than a happy hour that I spent in this household, and I was pleased when the meal was ended so that I could take my leave of this family over which I quite distinctly saw unavoidable misfortune hovered. I carried away the premonition of a coming storm, and the feeling that already clouds, strong puffs of wind and the first, yet distant lightnings and thunder were discernible. However, I did not think that it would come so soon.

In the evening of the same day when I was busy packing for the journey I was to resume in the morning, my host, the *ataman,* burst into my room.

"Sir, dear good sir!" he cried, all in a tremble and almost sobbing, "Come quickly, quickly, a terrible misfortune has occurred! Perhaps you can help us. The

young Cossack who came here with you has shot himself!"

I snatched my pharmacy-box and ran with the *ataman.* We found the Cossack on a bench in the outer room, unconscious, his face a ghastly blue, his lips strongly compressed, and his eyes in a fixed, lifeless stare. I understood at once that I could be of little aid as the other messenger was before me. I took his hand and felt that the pulse was yet perceptible, but that each throb was weaker—and then it stopped forever. I was afraid to tell the truth, as I thought that the young woman would not be able to bear it and might give way to feelings that would wake the beast in the heart of the old man.

But I saw her nowhere; I looked in the second room —no one was there.

"Are you looking for my wife?" the old fellow asked in a voice I did not like. "She is not here. . . . She went out before evening and has not yet returned."

"It is better thus," I replied; "she will not despair, for I must tell you that your son is dead."

The old man manifested no feeling, but simply looked at me with his shining eyes and grunted:

"She will not despair, this damned woman! She poisoned his life and mine. But now she will bring no more misfortune, for all is ended."

The Cossack was silent for a long time and then, pressing his head between his hands, he whispered:

"She drowned herself!"

CHAPTER XVII

ONE EYE

WANDERING through the Ussuri *taiga* from place to place owing to the news I received concerning new deposits of coal or gold, I once had to travel along a little forest road following the Bikin River and its small affluents. The Bikin flows into the Ussuri and divides the mountain ranges Sinku and Tzi-fa-kao, having its source on the western slopes of the Sikhota-Alin.

No coal was to be found here, but in the beds of the small affluents of the Bikin, Nature had scattered some gold. It is not a Klondike, but many adventurers with the craving for riches put great faith in the gold hidden in the Bikin's branches threading this vast *taiga*.

Almost every day I came across traces of the prospectors, these ever-shifting, restless seekers of gold. These were rocks and heaps of blasted stone, deep holes, trenches, and ditches to lead away the water and dry the places where the gold sands were supposed to be. But those who left these proofs of their presence went away long ago, and new seekers came after them, solitary or in little groups composed of different types of men very often with a criminal past. Having evaded the police and the mining inspectors, during summer and autumn they grubbed in the rivers, standing to the waist in water and washing gold from the sands, if only to

get enough to subsist until the following summer and to recommence the same operation. These men made dens for themselves in the ground, and worked with no other wish than to find a little gold and evade the police. They attacked no one and were afraid of everybody. When accidentally met in the forest, they never at once owned what they were doing, but always said that they were hunters or fishermen according to the localities they were in, exhibiting some squirrel or polecat skins or dried fish hanging near their hovels.

But other persons were also hiding in the thicket, small mobile robber gangs composed usually of two to three persons. They hunted the gold diggers and, after successful attacks, had themselves to be very watchful, since success always brought other robber gangs on their trail. The year that I traveled in this country a robber called "One Eye" was the terror of all the inhabitants of the *taiga,* lawful and unlawful; for he knew how to strike unexpectedly, was relentless and cruel to his adversaries, taking from them their every grain of gold, their last shirt, torturing those who refused to give up their hidden stocks, and concluding by cutting the throat of everybody. His instructions to his five associates, daredevils like himself, were:

"Kill everyone so as to leave nobody for revenge or gossip!"

But I did not yet know anything about him when I left the last railroad station, and rode into the *taiga* with its scattered villages of Ukrainian colonists.

I remember distinctly the July noon hour when I reached one of these small settlements on the left bank of the Bikin, composed of only ten houses. Nobody

came out from the houses as I rode through with my modest guard of two men. Women peeping through the windows hid themselves immediately; even the children did not appear in the street. I stopped before one of the better- and cleaner-looking houses, and knocked. For a long time no answer came, although finally I heard some one close a door leading into the yard, chain a dog, and murmur something I could not make out.

"Are you all mad here, you devils?" cried one of my Cossacks, angered by the slowness of the host. "You compel a learned man to wait outside in such a heat?"

This seemed to help, for after a moment an old woman appeared, opened the door and, inviting us to enter, explained:

"Excuse us, Sir, but we are frightened. People say that One Eye is somewhere near here and is on the eve of descending on us to exact a ransom. Perhaps our men might get the best of him; but, even so, afterwards the police would come, there would be inquiries, court investigations, and the men would be obliged to go to town during this hot and busy time. It is better to let nobody in."

My Cossacks laughed loudly:

"Well, what a wise lot you are," said the eldest one, a big, thin man with quick, nervous movements. "Will you remain shut up in your houses till you die?"

"More of that later," laughingly answered the old woman, busying herself about the tea. "Be seated, please, and take your ease. I shall at once prepare the tea and bring you a hot fish pie."

We were already at our ease, half lying on the big benches, exhausted by the heat and the struggle with

those Ussuri mosquitoes which seemed to have taken an oath to some patron saint to have all of our blood. Even my guides, accustomed as they were to this inexorable forest pest, swore so energetically that their very horses looked on them with shame.

We drank tea, liberally sampled the excellent pie of fresh *kaluga,* a fish of the sturgeon variety, and decided to take some rest.

"I sha'n't sleep," announced the old guide. "I shall get acquainted with these fools of peasants. Perhaps I can worm something out of them for you about gold or coal."

"Well, old mother, your men folk have to work in the *taiga?*"

"Of course," she answered. "They cut timber, hunt, and collect pine nuts."

"Well, I see that you have a good time here," he laughed gaily. "And do you prosper?"

"Yes, thanks to the Lord," she replied, devoutly crossing herself. "The soil is good, bread is plentiful, and we sell wheat in Habarovsk and Nikolaievsk. We have as many cattle as we want, the men hunt sables and martens, take vodka, tobacco, powder, and matches to the Golds[1] who pay with gold and furs. We are the Golds' nearest neighbors and we buy or take from them on commission the most of their goods, which are transported by us to the railway and to town. Sovienko himself bought from them five hundred sables and sold them in Habarovsk."

She spoke with the enthusiasm and happiness of wealth and sure trading.

[1] A Mongolian hunter tribe, camping in the forest of Ussuri.

"Well, it must be fine to live here," exclaimed my Cossack, and the second one laughed loudly, saying:

"You are so happy and yet you hide in your houses as in prison."

"It is only now because of One Eye," explained the old woman as she washed the dishes.

I fell asleep shortly after this point in the talk and, when I woke up, I saw that my guides were already prepared to start. I paid our hostess and we went away.

After some hours, during which we continued to be the prey of mosquitoes and of immense red flies called by the Cossacks *gnus*, we remarked beside the road traces of wheels and noticed five hundred yards farther on, a gold-seeker's shanty; when we rode up we found three of them drinking vodka and already very drunk.

After greetings were exchanged, the prospectors carefully asked us who we were and then, reassured, immediately quieted down.

I studied their workings in the gold-bearing sand, giving a solemn promise to tell nothing about it to the authorities, and we continued our journey to the great delectation of the mosquitoes and the *gnus*.

"These fellows have evidently succeeded in finding something worth while," observed the older Cossack; "it is not a frequent occurrence with these beggars, who live a life from hand to mouth."

We stopped for the night in a ravine with a stream rushing loudly along its stony bottom. After supper I rolled myself head and all in a large linen mantle and quickly fell asleep on the soft bed of boughs prepared by the Cossacks. Sometime during the night as in a dream, I heard noises, some steps and the snorting of

horses; but as the guides were there and as I had nothing to tempt a thief except my rifle and revolver lying near me under the mantle, I rolled over and continued my sleep.

The sun was already high in the sky when I awoke. The Cossacks sat by the fire drinking tea. Seeing that I was awake, they came nearer and told me that two of the pack horses had run away and that they had been unable to find them as they had probably gone back in the direction of the houses we passed yesterday.

"We shall start at once in search of them," said the older Cossack, going to his saddled horse which I noticed was covered with foam, as though it had been traveling hard.

The Cossacks went away and I waited for them a long time—till seven in the evening. I cursed them and the horses as heartily as I knew how. Finally, about seven, I heard the tramp of several horses and the sound of voices. After some minutes, a group of riders emerged from the forest and entered the ravine and as they came near I recognized the caps and uniforms of the police.

"Don't move, or we shoot," called the leader, raising his rifle.

I could not understand it at all; policemen attacking a wandering explorer! This, even in Russia, is not a usual occurrence.

"Very well, I shall not move," I replied.

They came nearer and asked for my papers. As these were quite in order and bore the Governor's signature, they at once changed their manner and descended from their horses. When they were seated near my smudge, the leader of the detachment, visibly troubled, asked:

"Excuse me, Sir, but how can it be, that you are connected with One Eye?"

"With whom?" I ejaculated.

"With the robber, that most dangerous robber, One Eye."

"If he is called so, he must have only one, and I know no such individual," I answered decisively.

"You deny it?" asked the policeman, astonished.

"Of course I do," I replied.

The policeman shrugged his shoulders and turning to his companions ordered:

"Bring the men here and show the gentleman One Eye!"

And before me stood my tall, thin guide, with the face of the second, stupid with fear, peeping out behind him. I was dumb with astonishment.

My guide, whose identity I could not question, really had but one eye. The red cavity of the left one was lachrymose with a helplessly fallen lid, while the right hale and sound member looked at me gaily and maliciously. Clanking his manacles, he saluted me, mumbling:

"I beg your pardon for the unpleasantness I have caused you."

The policemen took him away. Then I had to explain how I had hired these two men in the village near the station. They, it seemed, did not possess all the qualities one would wish in a bodyguard.

The leader of the detachment told me that One Eye and his companion attacked the prospectors hiding in the forest, murdered them all, robbed them of about five pounds of gold and then returned to me. Afterwards, under the pretext of looking for the lost horses, they

went back to the village where we had rested in the house of the too-confiding old woman. Here they went direct to the house of the rich peasant Sovienko and, menacing him with torture and death, compelled him to turn over all his money. He had just complied with this demand when the police detachment arrived and captured the robbers, who did not anticipate this unpleasant interruption. One Eye was already equipped with but one eye, as he had taken out his artificial sphere and put it in his pocket expecting a fight. This artificial eye was the most impenetrable mask for the robber in the locality where One Eye was the terror of everyone.

I am forced to record that One Eye was a well-mannered, agreeable individual. However, he put me to great inconvenience, as I was obliged to continue my journey with a Ukrainian peasant hired for me by the police who was stupid and lazy, continually lost his way and was silly enough to be afraid of old oaks which, he believed, were the homes of green forest devils. Several times a day, which was quite incomprehensible to me, he got drunk and then understood nothing at all, laughing like an idiot; and he was called . . . "Eagle"!

Gold is the supreme master in the *taiga* of the Bikin. Legends are told about fabulously rich veins in the massifs of the ranges and of marvelous pay dirt in the beds of profound and rapid rivers such as the Khor and the Iman; and from mouth to mouth pass tales of greedy crimes enacted in these forests and of terrible adventures of the prospectors.

In the name of the Metal of the Yellow Devil, as the Koreans call gold, terrible and bloody acts take place in

this Ussurian *taiga,* as well as acts of heroic courage and strength of will; but the Yellow Devil triumphs always and guides the men, allured by the sheen of gold, to crime and perdition.

CHAPTER XVIII

A BREATH FROM THE OLD, OLD TIMES

HERE in this endless virgin forest, where a white man is only rarely met, many Chinese and Koreans find for themselves a shelter and means of life. They are the real proprietors of these unexplored forests, knowing them thoroughly, making each year new roads and going ever deeper into the woods which, broken only by the rivers, stretch to the northern tundras. Besides these interlopers from the south, an aboriginal population is also found here, a population now dying out, but which regards itself as the rightful owners of these forest expanses. They are the Mongolian nomad tribe of the Golds. They live just as they did centuries ago, trapping small and big game, catching almost with bare hands elk and deer, sometimes using long bows and arrows with stone or bone tips in this day of electricity and steam. The only triumphs of civilization to reach the domain of the Golds are alcohol and powder.

Once during the time of the powerful Chinese Emperors of the Mongolian Yüan Dynasty, the Golds were an integral part of the State of Heaven, forming its northern rampart and defending it against the Tungutzes. Afterwards, at the time of the momentous changes in the state of Jenghiz-Khan and Tamerlane, the Golds passed successively under the domination of the Koreans,

Tungutzes, and Japanese; and, finally, when Russia occupied the Far East to the shores of the Pacific along the Manchurian and Korean frontier, this tribe became subjects of the Tsar.

They carefully paid all taxes, liquidating them in furs. They were really not very sure to which state they did belong as they paid taxes to the Russian Treasury, but from time to time were visited by Chinese officials, coming to them by stealth from near the sea, and they delivered to them also sable, marten, and squirrel skins for the Peking Treasury. They were terribly exploited by the Russian merchants and disappeared rapidly, poisoned with alcohol, this currency introduced by the Russian pioneers.

In 1905 a comic-tragic incident occurred, when an enterprising adventurer came to the Golds and began collecting sable skins as a tax for the English Treasury. Happily for the Golds, the versatile "Englishman" was met by a Russian official who rescued the sables and arrested him. The sables went to the Russian official's pocket, and it was said that he even divided the spoil with the "Englishman," letting him go free at the same time.

The Golds are magnificent hunters, tireless, excellent shots, and wonderfully courageous as they make expeditions against tigers and bears single-handed. They traverse in summer and winter the whole *taiga* from the Amur to the Bikin and even to the Iman. However, they do not go farther south in consequence of a long-standing tradition among them; for once in the thirteenth century, a Chinese Emperor issued an order forbidding the northern barbarians to approach the Korean frontier

and the country of the Manchus, fearing they would join the warlike Manchus and with them attack China and endanger the succession after the close of Jenghiz-Khan's reign.

I met the Golds in the forest north of the Bikin during my journey to Imperator Bay, where the Tsar's Government was considering building a canal to unite the Amur with the sea to have a shorter and more accessible outlet than the mouth of this immense river with its bars and bad approaches afforded. I traveled with two assistants and three guides through these forests, sinking often in the marshy mountain ravines.

One evening, when we were about to stop for the night, we remarked on a small mountain near-by the light of a fire that splashed with red the branches of the oaks and elms around it.

"They must be Golds," exclaimed one of the guides.

We approached the fire and soon reached a large forest meadow where, round the blazing logs, at least twenty men were seated. They were dressed in roomy skin trousers and coats with a sort of bonnet of the same material on their heads. They sat in silence, smoking pipes and looking immovably into the fire.

Some steps farther on under the trees stood a big native in a ragged dress adorned with more bright rags and ribbons, and with a tall headgear made of birch bark. He was continually bending to the ground and straightening himself again, pulling on a long leather thong whose upper end disappeared in the darkness among the branches of an old gnarled oak. I made a careful survey of the branches and suddenly discovered that the big man in the headgear was hanging another man whose

black form was slowly mounting to the wide-spreading branches, swinging and turning in the air. I wanted at once to rush in and rescue the victim, but one of the guides, long resident in the Amur district, smiled and said:

"Don't disturb yourself. The Golds hang their dead. This is their burial rite."

It was really so. We had arrived in the midst of the burial rites of a man who had died from drinking. It appeared that the body is wrapped in two pieces of birch bark carefully cut from a large tree. This improvised coffin is then tied with leather thongs and swung to the highest branches of an oak.

Often, afterwards, I saw hanging coffins in which rock swallows or white Arctic owls (*Nyctea nivea*) had made their nests.

When the birch coffin had been securely tied to the tree, lighted from beneath by the fire, the *shaman* came to the circle and, seating himself, took from an old native a lump of meat and a cup of alcohol. Only after he had finished eating did the Golds rise and come over to us, greeting us and asking us about our way and our plans and inviting us to join them around the fire.

I observed with curiosity their serious, wise look and never-smiling faces. I could not decide whether their expression were an atavistic characteristic or the result of alcoholism, as I have noted often that chronic drunkards are for the most part very serious and not given to joking and laughter.

When the moon was high, the *shaman* resumed his activities, for the burial service was composed of four parts. The first was the manufacturing of the coffin

and the raising of the body into the tree in the cemetery. The others were more complicated and difficult, the second being the prayers to the spirits of the other dead lying, or more correctly hanging, here to petition them to greet favorably the new companion; the third, the summoning of the spirit of the dead to converse with the family and friends; and, finally, the most agreeable part of the burial, a banquet called *izana.*

Rising from his place near the fire, the *shaman* began to change his ceremonial costume. He took off all the bright rags and the strips of red and yellow, putting in their place ropes, leather thongs, and chains with amulets tied to them, such as strangely shapen roots of different plants, bright stones, bits of human bones, bears' teeth, and other mysterious and miraculous things. On his head he put a large hat of deerskin; then he took up a drum and a whistle made from a bone, and on his back he placed a bag with gifts consisting of bottles of spirit, packages of tobacco, pipes, salt, and dried peas.

Then a strange pantomime began. On the meadow in the circle of high trees the fire cast changing lights and shadows on the leaves. A silent circle of gruesome and concentrated men was delineated sharp and black against the background of the burning fire, or showed faces red in its glare. Farther on in the thick grass the form of the *shaman,* lighted only from the one side, made tottering movements. He marched up and down, his head high in the air, crying from time to time in a piercing voice:

"Yin, Yin!" to the accompaniment of single strokes on the drum. My guides explained to me that in this manner the *shaman* calls each one of the dead to listen to

him. I looked around again in the trees and made out more coffins hung round in various places, partially hidden by new branches and leaves.

The *shaman* struck his drum forty times, each time repeating the sacramental call. He was silent for a moment and then, placing himself in such a position that all the dead could hear him, he began in his hoarse, throaty voice a long discourse, punctuated by intervals filled with drumming and whistling.

"Yin sumgu tamaz!" he called solemnly, which meant that the souls of the dead had come to accept the gifts.

The *shaman* uncorked one bottle of spirit and, making half a circle with it, spilled some of the precious drink in the grass; then he took a good gulp from it, sprinkled some more on the ground and drank again. This was repeated six times with each of the two bottles. I observed that our *shaman* was a sly and experienced performer, as his libations to the dead were meager and those to himself were profound. Seeing this, I felt sure that the souls of the dead would not be the ones to get drunk this night. After the alcohol, came the tobacco which the *shaman* divided fairly with the dead. Even a big portion of the salt he put into his mouth, leaving undivided the pipes and the peas.

After the ceremony of the sacrificial gifts there followed the ritualistic dances of the *shaman*.

He possessed real terpischorean ability. He leapt high and adroitly into the air, making graceful, rapid movements with his feet and hands; he stamped to beat time to the quick rhythm of his drum, or twirled on one foot with such speed that it was difficult to discern his face. He danced for a long time and getting very warm,

without interrupting the dance, began to strip himself of his amulets, hat, and upper garments till he was naked to the waist, but still continued to dance, waving and undulating his thin hands and naked arms. Finally, he stopped as smoothly as a well-oiled machine and, picking up his garments and gewgaws, came over to the Golds and announced that the dead had graciously accepted their gifts and would therefore be considerate to the new soul.

After the wizard had sipped some tea and cooled off a little, he dressed himself, took a good gulp from the bowl of brandy which stood there for general use, ate a bit of roast meat, and rose again.

This time he put on no decorations. He took only two small boards with a layer of white birch bark, thin as tissue paper, between them, and slowly moved in the direction of the new coffin. He stood there in silence as though in deep meditation, if it was not drunken numbness; and then we heard a sound as light as the singing of a gnat. It seemed to come from afar, but was in reality issuing from the thin boards which the *shaman* had raised to his mouth.

But the sound gradually swelled in volume until it became a continuous bass roar which awoke the whole forest from the thick grass to the tops of the oaks and filled the ears, the heart, and the mind, giving at times a feeling as though it would shatter the skull. Surely this *shaman* could drive a man mad with only the help of two small wooden boards and bits of bark. Finally, the roar diminished and melted away again into scarcely audible tones. At the same time the *shaman* advanced into the shadow made by the trees, and then in several

places in this darkness, small phosphorescent flames appeared.

At this the Golds whispered in awe among themselves and with terror stared into the dense shadow.

What was it? Was it a suggestion called up by the performing *shaman,* or some phosphorescent objects thrown by him into the air, such as bits of decaying oak, the powder of decomposed mushrooms; or had he thrown about some luminous insects like fireflies, so plentiful in the Ussurian country?

As the little flamelets appeared, the *shaman* exclaimed something that soothed and consoled the relatives of the dead who were already quite drunk, and that prompted the men in charge of the feast to replenish the tureens and bowls of brandy which greatly pleased my guides.

"A rich, a decent burial!" they whispered, rubbing their hands.

After the sorcerer had returned to his place by the fire, a banquet, or rather a drunken revel, in which my guides took part, began. The men simply deluged themselves with alcohol, had hiccups, fell down, and raised themselves again only to recommence their drinking. They ate little, some of them from time to time munching a bit of roast or boiled meat or of fish. After some hours the fire died down and the Golds lay around in a drunken sleep, mumbling and moving uneasily. My guides were still busy near the brandy casks though they were quite drunk.

I had misgivings about the morning ride, but I was mistaken. They turned out at sunrise, looking a little pale, but doing their work as usual, quickly and skilfully.

The Golds had disappeared entirely, having long before sunrise left their cemetery with its birch coffins swaying in the wind.

Some months later I met again in the *taiga* some of these very Golds who had left with me this disagreeable remembrance of their drunken, burial orgy; but my opinion of them underwent a change when I saw them struggling with their hard conditions of their existence. There were three of them, all hunters, with old rifles and with knives and axes in their belts. Their dress attracted my attention. Their trousers and boots were made all in one piece out of deerskin with the fur on the outside and were lined with close-cropped pelts of white hare. They wore a shirt peculiarly their own and worthy of description. It was a double garment made of deerskins with the hair both inside and outside and having between the two skins spirally twisted deer's veins interlaced like a net to form an insulating air cushion, the best defense from the cold. A bonnet, serving not only as a head covering but as a mask for the face, is attached to the collar and fur gloves to the sleeves. I wore such a shirt during my winter hunts and I unhesitatingly assert there is no better dress for severe cold. Protected by such a garment, the traveler can remain in comfort right on the snow during Arctic frosts and winds.

I came upon the Gold hunters one evening near their fire after a day's chase during which they had killed some deer. Next morning at sunrise one of the Golds started out for the hunt. I exclaimed in wonder at seeing his dress, for he put on his naked body only thin trousers and a shirt of the tanned skin of a young deer, with low fur boots, a sort of moccasin resembling those

of the American Indian. Then he strapped on a pair of short, broad skis, thus shaped in order not to impede his movements in the forest among the bushes.

Keenly interested to see him at work, I followed along and not very far from the camp I witnessed a charming hunting scene. The young Gold struck a fresh trail and began following a deer. With incredible fleetness he sped over the low bushes, shouting and whistling to the deer as if urging it on. He traveled so fast that he never lost sight of his victim and gradually directed it toward the deep snow-filled ravine on the edge of which I was standing. When the frightened deer reached the ravine, it plunged about in the deep snow and made but very poor headway in its efforts to cross it and climb the opposite slope. The Gold made the edge of the ravine just a little behind the deer and with a joyful swish of the skis was soon on top of the animal and had tied him, so that he could leisurely climb out and call his companions to lend a hand.

The speed of the young hunter was so swift and sure and each of his movements so full of power and grace that I felt real sorrow and regret as I recalled the night orgy in the forest with the coffins in the oak branches.

CHAPTER XIX

TIGER MEN

THE Ussurian *taiga* is exceedingly rich, counting among its treasures the most costly furs, gold, precious stones, ginseng, excellent fish, and game in abundance. It is easy to understand that men traverse this forest in quest of these riches and means of existence; and it is but natural that these men are followed by others less enterprising and bereft of all traces of morality. These are the "tiger men." I have already spoken of One Eye and of the gangs of robbers and other criminals ranging the forest and hunting men and their wealth, taken with toil from earth, stream, and forest glade.

Tiger men—this was the poetical name given to these *conquistadores* of the forest by one of the Chinese hunters on the Wula Ho, hunters often tormented by them, though the tiger men are for the most part themselves Chinese. They are separate, well-organized gangs of *hunghutzes* recruited from among the millions of the constantly hungry sons of the State of Heaven, the coolies out of work or the deserters from the undisciplined Chinese army.

Such despairing or adventurous individuals naturally gravitate together and form gangs which somehow provide themselves with weapons and start on the road for

adventures and spoil. They work not only in China, but range the Russian concessions in Manchuria, the northern part of Korea, and the Ussurian and Amur valleys.

Left to their own devices, they never work, except when they raise and collect mushrooms; but usually they become simply robbers, ready to commit any crime to further their operations.

This mushroom raising and collecting is a peculiar industry. On fallen or felled oaks grow white or yellow mushrooms of the *Mucous morel* variety. The Chinese collect and dry these for sale to the Chinese *bons vivants* by whom they are highly prized as one of the finest of Chinese delicacies. But these mushrooms are the bane of the Ussuri, as the Chinese tiger men and their ilk cut down whole forests on the river Knor, Daobi Ho, and Wula Ho just to get mushrooms from the fallen trees. These stricken giants lie and rot without real profit for the economic life of the region, as after four or five years the trunks do not produce any more mushrooms and are valueless.

During one of my hunting trips in the forest near the river Suchan, I arrived with my soldier at a solitary *fang-tzu*. Some horses with Chinese saddles stood near the broken fence. As we entered the *fang-tzu* unexpectedly, the six well-dressed Chinese lying on the *kang* smoking sprang up; but my soldier, an experienced man, raised his rifle and called:

"Hands up!"

They raised their hands as though in response to the order of their chief. Asking me to keep them covered with my gun, the soldier went to the post where six

rifles hung, took the cartridges out of them, tied together all the bandoliers, and addressed the Chinese in the Russian-Chinese jargon, this mixture of strange words developed in Manchuria.

"We know that you are *hunghutzes.* Cossacks are following us and then it will be *pu shang kao* with you. But we wish you no evil. We shall just take your rifles and two horses; we shall hide the rifles at the ford of the river Suchan and, when we meet the Cossacks, shall tell them that we have seen no bad men. And you, just as soon as we leave, can escape to the four winds. *Tung te mo* (Do you get me)?"

"*Tung te* (We understand)!" they answered in one voice.

"*Shang kao* (Fine)!" said the witty soldier with an air of dignity, taking and tying the rifles.

We backed out with our arms ready to fire, closed the door and blocked it with a big stick, chose two of the best horses and went away.

Some weeks afterwards the soldier sold his spoil to a connoisseur of old arms, as genuine *hunghutze* weapons were in great demand; and, having made a good bargain, he asked me, knowingly closing one eye:

"Please tell me, Sir, who in that *fang-tzu* were the *hunghutzes,* those dirty *manza* (Russian colloquial name for Chinese) or you and I?"

"You, of course," I answered, laughing, "because you made a good business out of these fellows and as a true *hunghutze* leader you did not divide your spoil with me."

"I knew that you would not accept your share. But excuse me, Sir, you rode the *hunghutze* horse to Vladivostok," he said with a sly grin.

"But I turned it over to the army," I answered readily.

"That was your own doing," he replied. "We poor soldiers cannot be so generous. It is for us to take and to sell what the Lord puts into our hands!"

CHAPTER XX

THE BLACK KETTLE AND THE DRUNKEN TIGER

FOR my scientific studies, the so-called Black Kettle was a very curious locality. It is a valley between the rivers Suchan and Tou Tao Kou. Immense layers of brown coal or lignite, the great and wise work of Nature acting as engineer and chemist, are to be found here.

The brown coal, of relatively new formation, is quite like the coal found everywhere on the half island Muravieff-Amurski, that is, it is good only as fuel. In the valley of Suchan, Nature herself very cunningly gave to the interior heat of the earth access to this coal, and the coal was thus half coked. So Russia possesses in the Black Kettle a good fuel, that is, brown coal, also a coal yielding good coke for metallurgic purposes and anthracite, as a product which changed the most under the influence of the high temperature. Of this kettle, Nature made a great laboratory which has manufactured millions of tons of coal.

The Suchan deposits are of great wealth to the country and have a marked industrial importance, as the nearest other available supply of coking coal is to be found on Sakhalin Island, where the lack of good docks and of

proper transportation facilities renders the exploitation of it difficult.

A second source of wealth in the Suchan valley is a very fertile black soil. As this closely resembles the soil of the Kieff and Poltava Governments, the Petrograd administration sent here a large colony of immigrants who quickly developed the agriculture of the valley and became rich, augmenting their wealth by hunting sables and big game.

Together with the valley of the river Tou Tao Kou in whose affluents gold is found, the district of Suchan is a very alluring region for capitalists. Bands of Chinese primitive miners were first attracted here and worked the richest pay dirt and hunted big game. It was in this locality we ran across the band of *hunghutzes* whom my witty soldier robbed so nonchalantly.

In one of the villages, not far from an active gold mine, I made the acquaintance of a jovial old Cossack by the name of Kangutoff. When I was free we went hunting together in this valley of the Suchan where game was so abundant.

When the engineers working in the mine learned that I was hunting with Kangutoff, they laughed and said:

"Kangutoff, the Drunken Tiger? He is a good hunter and knows the whole *taiga* here as he knows his door-yard."

As I was just starting out again, I had no time to ask about this strange sobriquet.

I made several excursions for pheasants with Kangutoff, as well as for wild boar, this bane of the peasant's maize fields. In the fields of wheat and beans, of *koaliang* or Chinese sorghum and of soya beans, or along the banks

of the streams overgrown with oziers and high grass, we flushed whole flocks of pheasants. My dog, a finely bred Gordon setter, was already so tired and nervous by noon because of the constant work, that after our luncheon he lay down and would not get up, whining and licking his paws lacerated by the sword grass; but, when he finally decided to follow me as I started into the bush, he at once forgot his sufferings, as the strong scent of the pheasants reawakened his hunter's enthusiasm. It often happened that when the dog marked a bird with a beautiful pose, the pleasure of the hunter's eye, other birds broke from right and left with whirring wings and startled cries. The astonished dog almost flattened himself on the ground and, not daring to turn his head, remained there on a fixed point covering his single bird, his quivering nostrils alone indicating the turmoil that was heaving in his soul.

Surely the pheasants of the fields and thickets of Suchan and Tou Tao Kou remembered me a long time. For two weeks I kept twenty families constantly supplied with this game for their table and became myself so surfeited with this dainty white bird that afterwards in the East I hardly touched it unless it was prepared in the fashion beloved in Vladivostok, that is in champagne; but I presume that an old rubber tire boiled in champagne would be tasty, as one could drink the broth and leave the rubber to the cook, as I usually did with the pheasant meat.

As hunting pheasants under such conditions is easy and monotonous, I quickly tired of it and felt the desire for more exciting sport. Wild boars (*Sus scrota*) promised this, as hunting them in the Suchan valley in the

bushes and grass nearly as high as a man, is not entirely without danger. In these thickets the boars feed on acorns, spending their days here and in the night time going out into the farmers' fields, rooting and trampling them disastrously.

Kangutoff took me to the Aksieievka region where the boars run in summer. I took with me my Henel rifle with its telescope and dum-dum bullets.

Kangutoff regaled me with tales of boar-hunting adventures, mostly far from comforting, as when the boar gored a hunter in the abdomen or tore his legs with its tusks, and other such similar stories. I interrupted the flow of these torturing tales by asking him:

"Tell me why you are called 'The Drunken Tiger'?"

He smiled, carelessly shaking his head.

"Just gossip," he answered, "and not worth repeating."

"Please tell me," I urged.

"Huh," he grunted sullenly. "Once anything happens, people right away give you a nickname. But if you insist, it was this way, Sir. The Governor came from Vladivostok to visit the Suchan mine. On leaving he was driven to the railway station in a carriage, and I rode as a guard on horseback. At the station, the Governor gave me a ten-rouble gold piece. You understand, Sir, that under such circumstances every healthy, decent man must enjoy himself a little.

"I did so, and in the evening was riding back along the road near the railway. My head was in such turmoil, with such a roaring in my ears that I imagined I was in the midst of an artillery fight. I was drunk then, terribly drunk, and rocked like a ship in the saddle. Suddenly the horse shied way off into the bushes leaving

me in a bunch of high, soft grass, where I found it easier to go to sleep than to chase him. It was already well after sundown and the twilight was going. I woke at sunrise and raised my head, aching and heavy as though it were full of lead. I wanted to go back to sleep again, but could not. As I raised up to have a look about the place I was in, my hair stood on end. Between the rails stood a tiger, lashing its tail and looking in my direction. Having no time to lose, I snatched my rifle from my shoulder, aimed, and, after firing, concealed myself in the bushes. After a moment, I had a peep; there stood the tiger between the rails looking in my direction. Sure that I had missed it because I was so drunk, I fired again taking a good aim, but afraid that the vodka had blinded my eyes. Then after a longer time I peered again, but sank back in the bushes as the tiger was still there and was looking off down the road. I shot once more and hid again. Then I laid there in the bushes for perhaps an hour, thinking that it would be better for the tiger to go away, as my drunken eyes and yet more drunken hands could do it no harm. Better it should go free than devour me.

"After a considerable time I looked again but saw nothing on the track. Then, watching still some minutes, with my rifle in hand I crawled out of the bushes towards the rails where I found three tigers lying one beside the other. In my drunkenness, I had killed them all, a she tiger and two males. This is why they call me the Drunken Tiger. I sold the skins in Vladivostok for six hundred roubles and the Governor, hearing of my adventure, sent me a second reward of twenty-five roubles. And again, Sir, I enjoyed myself and was drunk, un-

commonly drunk—but this time without tigers. But now I am myself a tiger, and, what is more, a drunken tiger. Gossip and foolish stories; people are always making jokes at my expense!"

Finally, the Drunken Tiger took me to the place selected for the hunt. It was a little village of five or six houses belonging to some rich peasants employing together about a hundred Chinese laborers to work their fields. They raised considerable wheat but did not sell it, as they used it in the unlawful manufacture of moonshine, which they sold to the surrounding villages. Their stills were very primitive and were hidden in the thick forest where fuel was at hand and where it was easier to evade the inspectors of the Government which maintained a monopoly on alcohol and derived half of its whole income from this exploitation of the people's passion. Naturally, the Government punished private competitors like the inhabitants of this little village, so friendly to my Drunken Tiger who was probably one of their best clients. We were received with great hospitality, which took the form of vodka offered at all hours of the day and night and whenever there was ever any special excuse. We hunted near the drunkards' village, and every killed or even only wounded boar was an occasion for new revels so welcomed and beloved by the old Cossack.

As I explained before, the hunt took place in thick bushes and high grass. Some peasants joined us and we usually advanced with Kangutoff fifty to sixty steps apart in the thicket looking for game. In summer time the boar has a very strong odor which makes him easy to locate. However, it often happened that the boar

ran from the thicket without being heralded by its aroma; and one had always to be careful as old boars often attack men, a fact that I experienced on this first hunt for the Ussurian variety.

We had just crossed a marshy meadow with the grass burned off and entered the thicket again. I had gone but a few steps, when I picked up the disagreeable smell of the boar and at the same instant saw him making for me like a boulder down a mountain. He uprooted a large bush as he charged the big birch tree behind which I managed to take shelter. He scored the trunk with his tusk and passed like a hurricane, grunting furiously. He cleared into the meadow, but there my dum-dum bullet overtook him, ricochetting from his back to behind his ear, and making of his head simply a bag of unrecognizable broken bones.

Hanging him on a tree to save him from beasts of prey, we continued our hunt and later sent the peasants to fetch him. We wandered in the thicket till sundown by which time I had killed one and Kangutoff three more boars. During this chase, I came to realize the hunting experience of the Cossack. He shot with a marvelous quickness and accuracy. Given only a glimpse of the boar in the bushes and the Drunken Tiger sent it a bullet which seldom missed its mark. Besides the three boars killed, the traces of blood proved that he had wounded five more, one of which was found the next day near the road by passing peasants.

During one of our hunts, we came to a *fang-tzu* in a deep ravine set in thick forest. We found there an old Chinese who received us hospitably but seemed worried as he kept constantly turning to a small box in one corner

of the room. We drank tea and chatted with the Chinese and, just as we were about to depart, he held us with the following story:

"Last autumn a Chinese came to my house. I don't know who the man was. He came to my *fang-tzu* to pass the night here and was taken ill. He remained for some time with me and when taking leave, as he had no money, he offered me a copper plate, saying: 'It is better than money, as it was taken from the grave of a great leader and miracle worker.' Perhaps you will have a look at this plate."

Of course, I consented. He opened the box and took from it a red kerchief. Unwrapping this he revealed and handed me a metal plate about ten inches long and four inches wide. Engraved signs which I did not recognize covered it, interlacing with the running loop pattern common to Mongolia and Thibet, and still showing traces of the black enamel with which they had been originally picked out. The remnants of a hinge were on one side, from which I inferred that it was part of a small door of a chest of drawers or of a box. A small piece with some of the signs had been cut off one corner with a sharp instrument. The Chinese handed me this little bit also.

"Give me twenty-five roubles and I will sell you this plate," he said, smiling rather apologetically.

I bought this strange thing and afterwards, when a rich Chinese merchant in Vladivostok saw it, he told me it was a copper plate with incantations such as were placed on the coffins of Ordos Mongols. On learning what I gave for it, he immediately paid me the same amount and allowed me to keep the small piece which I

preserved for a long time. Back in Petrograd I had it made into a charm for my watch chain, and once meeting a well known Orientalist, the Academician Radloff, I showed him this bit of copper with its strange signs and told him how I had come by it. As he was much interested in it, he took it to puzzle over, and some days later telephoned me that it carried an old Thibetan inscription, beginning:

"To the great warrior, who" . . .

The rest of the sentence remained on the plate I had sold to the Chinese.

Radloff told me that the plate was of gold. The jeweler to whom I then took my watch charm to be tested, found it to be a mixture of gold and platinum. I had learned too late that the Chinese did me out of about two pounds of gold and platinum and robbed science of a uniquely interesting bit of archaelogical evidence.

At the time I did not feel very strongly about the sly, unscrupulous act of this son of the State of Heaven, but now as Fate and the drama of our epoch have been tossing me from Kwen-lun to the Sayans and from Djungaria to the Pacific where this "Great Warrior" referred to on the little golden and platinum plate may have ruled, I cannot forgive myself my carelessness.

My imagination, spurred by this fragment, visualized now magnificent pictures of the ancient past when Asia was dominated by the descendants of Jenghiz Temuchin, a shepherd from Kerulen, who had the genius to create an immense State with frontiers touching the Volga.

To which of the descendants of the great Mongol did the gold and platinum plate refer? Perhaps the sacrilegious hand of a Chinese *hunghutze* or of a merchant

exploiter took it from the grave of the brilliant Kublai, or from the mound of Goondjur-Khan in Erdeni Dzu, the one who had a Polish wife; or from the stone pile forming the grave of Tamerlane the Lame or perhaps from the Arabic temple of the last of the Jenghiz descendants, the magnificent Sultan Baber.

But surely I shall never have an answer from the past, as the plate of this unknown warrior was undoubtedly long ago run into rings and ear-rings by the Chinese for their *"si-fa."*

CHAPTER XXI

MEN OF IRON WILL

THE station and village of Rasdolnaya is on the railway between Vladivostok and Nikolsk-Ussuriski. During the colonization of this country it was one of the first villages to acquire size and wealth as it lay at the intersection of highways from the frontiers of Korea and Manchuria, from Lake Hanka in the west and from the northern *taiga* along the Ussuri, the Daobi Ho, Wula Ho, and the Bikin. Hunters, the agents of various firms, Chinese, Koreans, tramps, and all those whom the forest maintained and enriched, had to pass Rasdolnaya on their way to Vladivostok. Here ambushes were prepared for them. All sorts of speculators bought, with wares or often with false money, gold, deer antlers, miraculous roots, furs, and oak mushrooms. Entrepreneurs of all sorts such as proprietors of eating-houses, inns, gambling and opium dens, also robbers and all the other dark types to be seen only at night in the streets of Vladivostok, lay in wait for these workers in the forest and greedily watched the leather and linen bags or baskets of oziers or reeds containing this wealth of the woods. All these riches passed through the hands of the inhabitants of the village on their way to Vladivostok, and to induce the transfer into the hands of these village middle men, any and all means, including cheating and murder, were

sanctioned. The development of the village grew out of these transactions. When I first saw the town, it already boasted its well-built stone houses, churches, some Government offices, schools, and the barracks of the magnificent dragoons regiment, commanded by Colonel Volkoff, the well-known sportsman and horseman, an ex-officer of the Guards and a personal friend of Tsar Nicholas II. In their hunting club the Colonel introduced me to two of the most marked personalities of the whole Far East, the brothers Kudiakoff.

They were simple Russian peasants who had come here of their own accord when the colonization of the Ussuri region was barely begun. They were from the northern part of the Urals and were men accustomed to a severe climate, hunters who knew all the forests and wildernesses of the tundras between Ekaterinburg and the mouth of the river Kara on the Arctic shore. During their first two years in the Primorsk, they tramped through the whole country, traversing it from the river Hubtu on the Korean frontier to the shores of Okhotsk Sea, reaching in the west Lake Hanka and the river Sungacha and in the east often to the shores of the Pacific.

They returned from this expedition with a profound knowledge of the value of the country and its riches and with another very valuable asset in the knowledge they acquired of the Chinese, Korean, and Gold languages as well as those of the Orochons and Tungutzes, having, during the two years lived continually with the natives. The characteristic Russian facility for picking up foreign languages and their ability to get along with very limited vocabularies enabled them to start friendly relations with the natives.

When I made their acquaintance, they were already rich merchants and leading citizens, but when I heard their tales and the whole heroic epic of their lives of struggle and adventure here on the shores of the Pacific as they were related to me by Mr. Potorotzchinoff and Mr. Walden, old inhabitants of this country, I always longed to set down the story of these men of iron will.

For a long time the Kudiakoff brothers hunted, killing squirrels, sables, martens, ermines, and polecats and sold their pelts to foreign agents. At the same time they bartered with the inhabitants of the *taiga,* exchanging powder, lead, rifles, tobacco, and tea for furs. This quickly enriched the enterprising brothers without waking the hate of the natives, as the Kudiakoffs did not exploit them and would not sell them any alcohol, this poison bringing sure death. During the time while the brothers were still simple hunters, the tragedies of the "White Swans" became more rare as the Koreans carrying their accumulated wealth put themselves under the protection of the Kudiakoffs and paid them well to be escorted to the Korean frontier. These experienced Ural hunters knew how to avoid the Cossack ambushes on the forest roads and when meeting the banditti, through their courage and skill, always succeeded in defending their white-robed clients. Their name was known through the whole of Korea and in many parts of North China, and the wise brothers knew how to profit by this so that they could have the best ginseng and deer antlers and much of the gold found by the Orientals in the Ussurian forest.

Understanding well the value of the trade in the precious ginseng roots, they bargained with their forest

clients to supply them with live plants and with these started the first ginseng plantation in a mountain ravine of the Sikhota-Alin. This plantation existed until 1907 and yielded big profits to its owners.

The Kudiakoffs loaned to forest tramps money, implements, and food to grub-stake them in their gold-seeking operations and they never lost in doing so, as these men, coming from nobody knew where and followed by the police, never cheated them but always paid their debts in some way or other, either with gold or furs or by working for the brothers.

The principal region of the activities of the Kudiakoffs was a locality between Rasdolnaya and the river Suchan where tigers and panthers were numerous, a fact that prevented the colonists from keeping cattle. The brothers during a single summer killed sixteen tigers and five panthers, quite freeing the locality of them and at the same time gaining much through selling the furs in Vladivostok and the hearts and livers to the Chinese in the forest, as these organs of the "she-cat" are used by the Chinese and Korean sorcerers as talismans against beast of prey and deadly illness. But the achieving of such a success was not an easy thing and both brothers were at least twice in the very paws of a tiger and carried terrible traces of the animal's claws on their breasts and legs. Yet this did not discourage them and among the hunters and trappers earned for them the sure title of the "Tiger Slayers."

The older brother once related the following to me:

"As you already know, I have killed about a hundred tigers and I have seen and lived many things during these hunts. My brother and I have made the observation that

a tiger quickly realizes when he is being hunted and investigates what sort of man is on his trail. If the hunter is not experienced, not such a professional as my brother and myself, the tiger usually lets him go and conceals himself among the bushes or behind rocks. But the one who has already tiger blood on his conscience fares otherwise. As soon as the tiger has smelled such a man, he begins at once to reverse the game and hunt him, trying to attack him unexpectedly in a place where the hunter will be at a disadvantage for shooting, that is, in thick bushes or among closely growing tree trunks, or in a mountain ravine with tall grass.

"We, for instance, after killing our third tiger have never since brought one down by shooting in front of us, but have invariably had to swing about as the tiger attacked us from behind. It has always meant turning quickly and shooting when the tiger was jumping or running or when crouched on the ground all ready for the spring. Such a hasty shot from an awkward position is always uncertain and very risky; for, if the bullet does not stop the beast dead, a catastrophe is almost unavoidable. The beast will surely jump on the hunter and then the only hope is in the knife or the axe. We have had to resort to these weapons and know full well the danger of such encounters. If the tiger is hungry and out looking for food, it will not readily attack a man, unless hunger has made it desperate; and even then it rarely attacks a white man, but much oftener an Oriental. If a pair of tigers are hunting for food and come across a white man, a Chinese and a dog together, they will first attack the dog, then the Chinese, and only afterwards the white man.

"The tigers do not like European flesh," added Kudiakoff laughingly. "Obviously, it is not tasty, as it is soaked in alcohol! It has happened that a tiger, after mortally wounding a Russian, has gone away and left him; but it will pick the bones of a Chinese as we do those of a chicken."

This statement of Kudiakoff was confirmed to me some months later by an occurrence which took place on the Harbin-Vladivostok railway near the station of Udimi where I was engaged at the time in building a big charcoal plant to supply the Russian army during the Russo-Japanese war. As a defense against the *hunghutzes* I had some Russian soldiers, one of whom was an enthusiastic hunter and kept us supplied with venison and other game. One day he started out very early but did not return from the forest, and his absence was only remarked the following day and a rescue party sent to search for him. He was found among the bushes with his skull smashed and his brain torn by a tiger's claws while all his joints were twisted and snapped by the beast which had evidently played with him as a cat plays with a mouse. The hunters told me that when attacking a man a tiger first benumbs him by a blow and then, pressing his terrible claws into his joints, breaks all his tendons and bones. When the man lies thus helpless, the tiger crushes his skull and leaves him to die slowly and painfully and afterwards returns and devours him.

In Vladivostok I was told about the beginning of the really substantial wealth of the Kudiakoffs. After some years in the Ussuri country, the brothers journeyed north and spent a whole year on the shores of Imperator Bay not far below the mouth of the Amur in the Tartar

Passage. Here they bartered with the Golds and Orochons, the nomad hunting tribes, and synchronously constructed by dint of hard labor two large sea-going craft for sail. Their first intention was to round the northern point of Sakhalin to make the Bay of Nyisk on the eastern shore near which lay the Nutovo region where the native hunters said there were large deposits of petroleum. It was there that twenty years later the German engineer Kleie, in the employ of the Ostasiatische Lloyd, found this petroleum and organized a stock company to develop it.

When the Kudiakoffs with their hardy crew finally put to sea, they were caught in heavy weather and blown west, where they were forced to land on the shores of an unknown island in the Okhotsk Sea which proved to be the southernmost island of the Shantars group. Here the bold mariners found the waters abounding in whale and the shores covered with herds of seal. They began at once hunting both these animals and soon gained much experience and skill. They even opened warfare against the Japanese poachers who murdered the seals without mercy and contrary to all laws for their preservation; and in doing so these hardy pioneers and their crews had to take many a bullet from the Japanese.

The brothers conducted these operations for about two years. They established relations with the natives, hunters, and reindeer herders, collecting many furs, much blubber and walrus tusks, and, learning that these goods could be sold in Petropavlovsk and Markovo on the Kamchatka, sailed north and established a new outlet for their produce.

Kudiakoff told me that they had made up their minds

to settle on Kamchatka to occupy themselves with hunting on the Shantar Islands and on the Okhotsk Sea when they heard about the Commander Islands in the Behring Sea due east from Kamchatka. There, they were told, lived the smallest and finest variety of seals yielding valuable furs much in demand in the English and American markets.

"We decided to visit the Commander Islands and hunt the seals, whose quantity, according to the Kamchatka natives and the traders, was incalculable. But we were also told that near these islands one can always expect to meet small Japanese and even Canadian sailers, searching for the seal rookeries. We made thorough preparations for our expedition, even mounting a little gun we bought in Markovo.

"We sailed along very happily until we were overtaken by a Russian man-o'-war on its way to the islands to clean out the Japanese pirates who had built a village there. As the man-o'-war was not exactly congenial company for us either, we decided to remain at sea and cruised for ten days, not without profit; for we ran into a school of whales. We killed two of these sea monsters and, dragging them to the rocky reefs of an island, separated the blubber and bones, completing our work just as we saw on the horizon the smoke of the departing man-o'-war.

"Approaching the Commanders, we ran into a big bay on the south, where we found, however, nothing but a school of herring that was just entering. After catching and salting a good stock of these, we continued along the island until on the shores of a smaller bay we came upon a picture which I shall never forget. Not a foot

of ground seemed visible where this herd of thousands of dark-brown seals basked in the sun. Some of them in their sleep looked like well-stuffed bags; others romped and played, ungracefully jumping and falling at full length. On a high sandy bank lay a group of the older beasts, ranged in a circle. When we dropped anchor and approached the shore in our small boats, the scattered members all surveyed us and with ungainly movements made for the herd.

"Armed with heavy sticks and oars we advanced. It was an awful slaughter of helpless beings. Roaring sadly and protractedly, they fell one after another, only some of the old males at times raised on their fins, showed their tusks, and tried with their vicious, short barks to frighten us. It was the only protest of these calm, helpless animals. We killed a hundred of them, choosing the biggest, to find which we climbed the elevation and took all the circle of the old ones there. This proved a great mistake as it left the main herd, consisting of more than fifteen hundred, between us and the sea. We realized it too late and could only watch the whole mass of them roll into the sea and disappear. We learned afterwards that more experienced hunters drive all the seals to the middle of the island and each day take a certain number until they have secured them all. Our herd profited by our ignorance and, though we spent several days skinning our rich spoil and waiting, they did not return.

"Beating further to the east along the south shore, we found one more small herd which yielded us eighty-five skins. With these in our hold, we steered south at once, leaving Petropavlosk to starboard and headed di-

rectly for the harbor of Dué on the Tartar Passage side of Sakhalin, from where, after a short stay, we proceeded south to Vladivostok. Here the handsome profits we realized richly rewarded us for our efforts and risk. The following year we made another and most successful journey to the Commander Islands, selling our catch to German traders, who paid us very high prices to secure the skins against American competition.

"But alas," Kudiakoff ended his tale, "it was our last journey to Behring Sea. A year later the Government sent an armed patrol to protect the seals from foreign and Russian hunters. From that moment one could only be a poacher and we both disapprove of this."

"What did you do with your sailors?" I asked, interested in the details of their sea adventures and in the fate of their courageous mariners.

"We kept them in our employ for a long time afterwards," he answered, "arranging our affairs as follows: Each year one of us managed the business at home, organizing hunting expeditions for sable, bear, tigers, martens, squirrels, elk, and deer; buying ginseng, gold and deer horns in the velvet; cutting timber and preparing new fields for wheat, beans and millet; building oil-mills for the production of oil from the soya-bean; constructing new houses; furnishing wood for the railroad, or prospecting and selling new lands with deposits of coal, gold, and other ores. The other sailed the Okhotsk Sea where, near the Shantar Islands, he hunted whale, extracting blubber and whalebone from them; caught salmon and herring and sold these valuable products, for which there was such a good demand, in Vladivostok or even in Shanghai, where we several times arrived on our sailers,

and loaded cargoes of Chinese tea, *tussah,* or pongee, and English woolen materials. One summer my brother made another expedition into Behring Sea and there, on the shore of Anadyr Bay, found a great quantity of amber and ambergris thrown up by the waves, bringing back from this far-away coast large lumps of real amber often weighing several pounds. It was of the golden-yellow color for which the Chinese pay the highest price, using it as they do not only for women's ornaments but also for amulets with power to give long and happy life. Ambergris is a product given off by whales and has a strong, agreeable odor. It dissolves in vegetable oils and in alcohol, and this is the reason it is used in China in the preparation of perfumes and brings a price equal to its weight in gold."

The Kudiakoffs showed me their wonderful collection of all sorts of products and curiosities of the Far East. It was a real museum into which they had gathered the most strangely formed ginseng roots (*Pentifolia panacea genseng*), spring deer antlers, musk, bear, tiger, and panther skins, walrus tusks, whalebone, ambergris and real amber, gold-bearing sand, precious stones, ores of all sorts, skins of Ussurian birds, and objects related to the religious cults of the Golds, Orochons, Ainos, Kamchadales, Koreans, and Chinese. Some years later I learned that the brothers had offered their unusual collection to the Museum of the Russian Geographical Society of Vladivostok and Habarovsk.

These Kudiakoff brothers, their life, their social and political views, and their characters stirred a profound sympathy in me and I have often thought that these men of iron will ought to be held as a model before the

youths who are today developing in weakness of morality and will during our times of secession from restraint and unwholesome agitation that is destroying our social and political stamina.

CHAPTER XXII

A MONUMENT TO VODKA

THE Ussuri railway unites Vladivostok with the capital of the whole Amur country, Habarovsk. About one-third the way is the station of Shmakovka, near which there was a large orthodox monastery, *Shmakovskaya Obitiel,* where, before Bolshevism, about a hundred monks busied themselves with a large agricultural establishment raising cattle and fine horses of the Kholmogorsk breed, running a dairy, making excellent cheese, fishing, and leading a pious, severe and hard-working life.

After the Bolshevik storm, practically nothing remains except some ruined buildings. The monks were killed or banished and those alive now drift somewhere on the immense and stormy sea of Russian life, without a shelter, without rights, and hunted by the anti-religious rulers of Red Russia. The cattle were slaughtered and the horses taken for the Bolshevik army, the treasure of the monastery, the ikons of the Saints, and sacred articles of the church looted, so that now the Shmakovski monastery is a ruin. I had visited it during my first trips into the Ussuri country, being interested not so much in the work of the monks as in the monastery's medicinal spring famed throughout the country and reported to be a naturally charged water of the type of those of Gies-

shubler, Kreiznach, or the Caucasian Essentuki. Hundreds of people coming here in the summer for a cure found in the monastery a shelter, a medical help, and health. The principal characteristic of this spring was its high radio-activity and the persistence of the emanation absorbed by it, which gave it a powerful and rapid healing action.

I heard many rumors of other mineral springs to be found in the neighborhood of the monastery and I was directed by the Geographical Society to study and analyze them. To do this I carefully explored the country round about but, with the exception of one small spring possessing rather large quantities of carbonic acid and flowing from under dolomite rocks, I found nothing. During these tramps, however, I saw many curious things characteristic of the life of this frontier. Thirty miles east of the monastery in the forest on the bank of a little river, I stumbled upon an extraordinary nomad camp.

In the meadow and on the river bank stood about twenty tents or wigwams, made of thin birch poles covered with birch bark. No smoke from the fires usually burning in the wigwams issued from the openings at the top. A man crouched near the entrance of one of the tents.

"This must surely be a camp of Orochons," ventured my guide, one of the monks. "They come here early in the autumn for the winter sable hunt. They are quiet, industrious, and good people. Let us go to them, for it will interest you."

As we came nearer, the monk called out:

"Greetings, my friend, will you receive guests?"

As the native seated near the tent did not answer,

we rode up closer and were shocked and frightened to find that this man leaning with his back against the wall of the tent and dressed in fur blouse, trousers, and boots, was dead.

In silence and awe, we looked at each other and, without speaking, quickly dismounted and began peering into the wigwams. Everywhere were the corpses of men, women, and children, even in one, beside a cold hearth, that of a little baby in its hanging cradle.

"What caused the death of these people?" I finally asked the monk.

He took off his cap and prayed in silence. After a little, lowering his head on his breast, he replied with a sigh:

"Our Russian crime, Sir!"

I did not understand and he had to explain.

"Look about, Sir. Everywhere bottle, tins, and casks. Alcohol was in them and it was that which killed the nomads. The Russian merchants do not consider the natives to be men. As one can with impunity rob them, fool them, and even kill them, it is a simple matter to deluge them with alcohol. It is a conventional way of bartering with the nomads. First, the Russian merchants make them drink, then he takes the most valuable furs at disgracefully low price and pays with some cheap concoction of spirits. Under this system the Orochons have long since become drunkards and will sell their souls to the devil for a glass of vodka. Such was the case with these poor creatures. They probably sold their goods and came here with their vodka to spend the winter. During one of their holidays they have drunk until the cold and wind caught them in their stupor and finished

them. The fires go out and with them their lives. Gross crimes are committed, Sir, for the sake of gold and riches. The devil has spread this epidemic of lust among human kind and to further it, he gave men this poison, alcohol. It weakens the conscience, the will, and the strength, and leads men to their ruin."

The monk ended by raising his hand in imprecation against all this evil and of those who work it.

This criminal activity of the Russian merchants among the Siberian and Mongolian nomads is the cause of the disappearance of whole tribes, which were quite numerous until not long ago. It has occurred in Kamchatka, on the Anadyr River, on the Tsukotsk promontory, among the Yakuts, Ostiaks, Golds, and the Ainos of Sakhalin. Russian officials, doctors, and hunters, who sometimes come to these far-away and sparsely peopled regions, not infrequently come upon these camps of perished nomads who have paid this terrible price to civilization.

All sorts of epidemics, especially small-pox, decimate this drunken population of these corners of the northeast Asia and no one except the *shamans* struggles against the bacilli and germs of the diseases, but with the devils imagined by themselves, which they try to frighten and drive away with drumming, whistling, and hysteric, drunken cries.

With minds depressed and filled with these black thoughts we left the camp of the dead. Just near it, as we were passing through some tall, thick grass, we found the remains of some pheasants on the ground with a noose of horse hair round their necks. The natives tie the thick grass in such a way as to form a number of small, low passages in which they stretch nooses of horse

hair. Pheasants and other birds feeding on the ground run into these nooses and perish in this barbarous way by the hundreds.

In the neighborhood of the monastery where pheasants are numerous I often came upon these traps. Once I found in one of them a snake which had cut its throat with the horse hair of the noose attached to a strong bush. The noose was partly broken away but the immense snake died a few steps farther on. It was five feet long and carried on its light brown body black lines and spots and was of the boa-constrictor type. In the Ussuri these pythons are, however, rarely met. They are known to attack not only birds, but also does and even young boars. When visiting the marshy valley of the river Suifun, our carriage passed over a boa sleeping after a good and plentiful dinner. The carriage wheels cut it in two, and in its belly we found five hares, a bird, and a rat. I was told also that in some localities near the railroad the boas make havoc among the poultry.

Before the Bolshevik times, the Museum of the Society for the study of the Amur country had some specimens of the Ussurian boas. This zoological type is one of the best evidences that the Ussurian country is the field of struggle of the North and South. In the same forest the inhabitants of the snowy sub-Arctic regions, the sable, meets the terror of the tropical jungles, the boa. Nature, to create for the boa a familiar habitat, threw into the Ussurian *taiga* the palm (*Dimorphantus palmoideus*) which calmly thrives near a native of the Arctic zone, the cedar, wreathed in Virginia creepers through which the cousin of the Bengal tiger, the Amur tiger, forces its way. All this forces the traveler to think that Nature,

at the moment when the flora and fauna of the country were created, either got everything all mixed up, forgetting her usual meticulous principles, or sought to make a practical joke.

Some jokes of this sort are not thoroughly appreciated by man. One of these chose wheat for the butt of its fun. Some years after the colonists made initial sowings of south-Russian varieties, the crops became infected with a poison. The peasants called it "drunken wheat" as the symptoms of poisoning resembled the action of alcohol. Studies made of the matter proved that a special fungus from the family of the *Mixomycetes* developed in the wheat, setting up a fermentation in the flour, strongest during the rising of the dough made from the infected wheat. In such bread are formed the so-called high alcohols, such as amyl alcohol, as well as glycerine and aceton. After some years the Ussurian wheat outlived this infection and "drunken wheat" now rarely troubles the population of the country.

CHAPTER XXIII

A HUNTER'S PARADISE

HOWEVER, if the traveler wants to see the strangest mixture of North and South, a place where the Arctic regions meet Egypt and India and Siberia meets Japan, he must visit Lake Hanka, situated on the frontier between the Ussurian country and Manchuria.

If such a traveler be not only a student of Nature but also a lover of shooting, he will be doubly pleased as the lake, the river Sungacha flowing from it, and some fifty miles of bogs and marshes to the east of Hanka overgrown with bulrushes, reeds, and other aquatic plants are a true hunter's paradise.

My first visit was in the early spring when the ice still held its winter lock on the streams and small lakes surrounding Hanka. True, it was already of a bluish color and showed many holes melted through by the sun, but was still strong enough to carry a man and even a wagon drawn by two horses.

I had come with a group of hunters to shoot migratory aquatic birds. At one of the stations on the Nikolsk-Habarovsk line we hired a wagon and struck west toward Hanka. The marshes began at this point forty odd miles from the lake and were interlaced with a network of rivulets and streams that ran in and out of the countless small and large lakes hidden in the forest of reeds.

When we started at dawn, the air was sharp with cold, but about noon the sun was so warm that the wheels of our carriage sank deep in the black marshy soil and the horses with difficulty dragged their feet from the sticky muck. We had to reduce speed, and finally our driver, a Cossack, decided that the horses would not be able to reach the appointed place. After consultation we made up our minds to remain in this locality where the lakes and the places with favorable conditions for blinds were very numerous. Already during our trek in, we could not abstain from cries of astonishment at the countless flocks of geese, swans, and ducks flying over the basin of Hanka, settling on the lakes and in the reeds, or whirling and starting again in pursuit of the spring on its northward flight.

We halted near a rather large lake which we could not, however, see for the banks of bulrushes and reeds that surrounded it. A haystack, which had not been taken away during the winter, remained near the bank. Near this we gave orders to the driver to unharness the horses and to prepare the camp. From the hay we made soft seats and bedding and soon our camp was ready.

Without waiting for the tea which the Cossack began preparing, I took my gun, whistled to my dog, and went off in the direction of the lake. But a few rods away my Gordon setter raised its head, cocked its ears, straightened its tail, and began very carefully advancing on a clump of grass. As yet I saw nothing, but clearly heard the quacks and splashings of the ducks, even discerning the voices of the different varieties. Sometimes I heard the bass tones of geese, or the prolonged note of the northern swan. High in the sky traveled flock

after flock, making the air resound with their calls and often wheeling down in large spirals to alight on some of the lakes.

After a few steps the dog stopped before the clump and was immobile as a bronze statue, picturesquely posed. I was astonished as we were on dry soil and I could consequently expect only a snipe. When I told the dog to go in, something black was visible for a moment but immediately disappeared in the high grass. It was not a bird, and I was at a loss to know what animal could be living in this bog. Putting the dog in again toward the place where the animal was hidden I advanced another fifty paces to see my dog once more make a point. A very dark hare sprang from the grass and was overtaken by my pursuing shot. When I held it up to study it, I was struck by the smallness of its legs, by the size of its head, which was larger than that of a hare, and by the almost black coat it wore. It was a black hare, a variety first discovered and described by the well-known Asiatic explorer Pshewalski on the river Sungacha, north of Hanka. But Pshewalski called it a hare, whereas I was inclined to classify it as a rabbit.

Many years afterwards, during my journey across Urianhai and Mongolia, I confirmed my hypothesis as in the neighborhood of Lake Kosogol in the larch forests near the town of Khathyl, I several times saw wild rabbits with a very dark-brown fur and in their measurements closely resembling the Belgian breed of these animals. These rodents are rare, as the pure breed has evidently almost disappeared, owing to the fact that the rabbits have mixed with common hares, among which specimens with a very dark pelt and with a slightly dif-

ferent appearance from the northern hare are often to be met.

This meeting with the hare was merely an accident and only its dark coat could justify the shot which caused clouds of aquatic birds to rise from the near-by lakes. With staccato quacks, hundreds of ducks whirred away and settled in more distant pools; big geese honked as they beat up vertically into the air; snipe and seagulls cut the air in every direction, shrieking piercingly; careful swans, herons, and watchful cranes flew close over the sea of reeds and disappeared behind small elevations to the west.

I thought that all was ended, that I had frightened the whole bird kingdom, and spoiled the sport for myself and my companions for the rest of the day. But I had hardly time to secure my spoil to my belt when my dog, working on ahead, suddenly stopped near a little puddle in so strained a pose that I knew he was right on top of his quarry. When I hurried forward and called to him: "Take it," he made a short leap that sent three big gray ducks, shrieking up out of the puddle. Two shots, and only one of the trio was left in flight, while the dog was bringing in the other two for my hunter's bag. After this I returned at once to camp, excusing myself before my companions for having frightened away all the game. My apology was greeted with laughter and one of the hunters said to me:

"If you had shot once a minute, the game would still be plentiful for us all. It is light now, but after sundown you will see how it will be here. How many cartridges did you bring with you?"

"Five hundred," I answered almost ashamed of my greediness.

"What?" cried the hunters. "Five hundred for three days? Each of us has two thousand as well as a supply of powder, shot, and empty shells!"

These words astonished me, but inwardly I was pleased at my forethought, for I had in my box a hundred brass cartridges, two tins of powder and a five-pound bag of No. 3 shot.

With great impatience I waited for the evening. I could not even eat. I overhauled my belt containing sixty-four cartridges and distributed twenty more through the pockets of my fur shooting jacket, which had already seen so many thrilling hunts in the forests and mountains and on the lakes and seas of European and Asiatic Russia. I cleaned my gun, put vaseline on my high wading boots, tied up my faithful setter which could only be a nuisance during the evening flight shooting, and then sat down on the soft hay to gaze enviously at the ducks, geese, and swans flying in all directions. I felt certain that all the wild fowl would, before evening, have passed over the Hanka marshes, leaving to us only the small singing birds, whole flocks of which flitted about in the reeds, singing, quarrelling, and even fighting among themselves.

Finally, the desired moment arrived and I was safely ensconced in my ambush among the rushes on the lake shore.

The sun, as though mocking my impatience, slowly settled in the west, leaving an immense arc of color in the sky. Already the first waves of the twilight, transparent yet and full of light, enveloped the earth. In the reed

and bulrush thickets, blue and purple shadows were visible, among which the small birds sought their night shelter, twittering with sleepy voices. Shreds of cloud in the west began to burn red and gold in the pale green sky. A shadow-like transparent gauze veiled the tops of the dry reeds with their brown, velvet brushes, making all outlines and forms more soft and indistinct and extinguishing the golden surfaces of the lakes and the ribbons of the streams. A mysterious silence came from everywhere and seemed to press down into the listening, dry brown grasses all voices and sounds. The singing birds, having chirped their last prayer of thanksgiving or their good-bye to the disappearing sun, settled down for the night; the voices of the frogs, already waked from their winter sleep, were quiet; the little breeze, which had rustled the dry plants and grasses killed by the winter frosts, quieted also; the ducks were not splashing in the lakes; and the silence was cut only by the bats in their noiseless flight.

The stillness became more profound and powerful. Even the buzzing of gnats and the noise of the antler-beetle crawling on a dry stalk were disturbing.

The last brilliant costumes in the cortege of the disappearing sun passed on over the horizon and silence took masterful possession of the earth.

Then from far away there floated in on the waves of approaching darkness a short, bass note. Silence again, then the same sound but nearer and louder. Then other sounds and echoes of movement. A flock of geese, not very high above the marsh, flew in a triangle sharp as an arrow head, with many forms on either flank. The leader at the head of the triangle blew from time to time

loudly and calmly with his bass, three-toned voice, as if calming and calling his mates.

The first shot rang out. It cleft like a thunderbolt the wavering stillness. The reeds seemed to move on the marshes as a flock of noisy ducks cried in terror and started from a lake at my side; seagulls, passing in frightened flight, whistled loudly and from above, with a broken flapping wing, a wild goose came down like a stone. The flock with wild cries shot upward, reforming its ranks and stretching away in a long, waving rope like an autumn cobweb.

The hunt had begun. From all the ambushes came incessant shots and I saw or heard innumerable falling birds. I had to go back to camp three times for more cartridges. In this one evening, I shot three hundred times and frequently the barrel of my Winchester was so hot that I could not touch it with my hand. In the evening hunt in this delusive, transparent twilight, in which space and all outlines are distorted, one shoots at all ranges without being able to draw a certain aim.

When it was quite dark we sent our dogs to fetch the dead and wounded birds we could not find ourselves. My bag counted one hundred and five, of which eighty-four were ducks and embraced twenty-six varieties. The remainder of the birds were geese, Arctic swans (*Cygnus musicus*) and even an Indian flamingo, which had surely lost itself among the flocks of common cranes.

While the other hunters were bringing back to camp whole heaps of birds, our Cossack dug a hole, lined it with hay, and placed in it lumps of ice and snow to make a sort of refrigerator for our spoil, covering the whole with a thick layer of hay and dry bulrushes.

After supper, enlivened with bright and often Homeric tales of the hunt, we turned in on our soft couches. For a long time I could not sleep. The shots still sounded in my ears; I heard the honking of the geese and the cries of the ducks; I started at the noise of the geese falling in the water. These were the echoes of the impressions of the day, but when I woke in the night, for a long time I listened to the real sounds of darkness. Across the black abyss of the sky sped flock after flock of calling geese and ducks; and the whole night was full of life as the migratory birds of every sort fled on with winged spring, dreaming of their mysterious nests that they would jealously hide from men's eyes somewhere in the Asiatic tundras, in the marshes along the shores of the Arctic Ocean, or on the islands in the deltas of the great rivers in Siberia, where no human beings would threaten the life of their young broods. Poor birds, they did not think that their children would take the same route southward in the autumn and that here in the reeds of Hanka, hunters would lie in wait for them, as they would in a thousand other places, along their path of flight to the lakes in the Indian jungles.

Our second hunt took place before dawn and under the first rays of the rising sun. It was more difficult shooting, as the birds were more careful and spied us out with their sharp eyes in our ambushes among the reeds. Even so, our spoil was plentiful. I killed several ducks and among them a rare specimen of a South China variety known as the Mandarin duck with two large white feathers in its wings. It is a curious feature in the life of this bird that it often makes its nest in a high tree. I also brought down three red geese (*Casarca*

rutila) which in Mongolia are called "lama birds" because of their red feathers, reminding one of the robes of the Lama priests.

With the increasing caution of the birds in the morning light, we had to give up our hunt and returned to camp, where hot tea and geese and ducks very skilfully roasted by our Cossack, awaited us.

CHAPTER XXIV

ON THE MARSH

AFTER breakfast my companion went to sleep again while I with my dog plunged into the sea of bulrushes and of blackened old grass to see what other game the marshes offered. Snipe rose every moment, but I did not shoot at them as I had only large shot and knew that I must economize these. I realized at the outset that it was no day for dry land hunting as the grass and reeds were so dry that my footsteps made a great deal of noise and frightened the game; but I continued as I wished to study this marshy valley about which the travelers Pshewalski, Busse, and Maack had written with such enthusiasm and I wanted also to observe the life of these aquatic birds when undisturbed in their habitat. This is a pastime I have always enjoyed immensely since the earliest years of my childhood when my mother taught me observation during our walks in the forests and fields and awoke in me the strong, almost elemental, love of untrammeled nature which is probably the reason for my hunting passion. It is probably also this love of nature that wakes within me the primitive man-hunter, fighting with the help of his mind, accuracy of his eye, and with his strength to win his food and the means of existence.

When, after some time spent hiding and watching along the lake I finally left the shore and again struck

into the thicket, I witnessed an extraordinary scene full of wild charm. A big bird, which I took for a heron, dropped like stone, evidently seeking to hide among the reeds. An eagle followed it in swift downward glide, beating the heron to the earth and passing under it, compelling its victim to rise again high in the air. In two powerful spiral turns, the eagle mounted above the bird and overhung it for an instant and then, closing its wings and becoming only a small black ball, shot down like a bolt on the heron, which was flying obliquely. The heron saw the maneuver and at once prepared for defense by turning its head on its back and aiming its sharp beak directly at its falling assailant with the intention of piercing the eagle's breast. But the eagle in turn saw the heron's move and struck behind the defending head, causing the heron to somersault in the air and leave its unprotected breast uppermost. Another swift movement and the eagle gave its victim the death blow and sent it on a slanting, helpless flight to the earth. As the eagle followed to finish it, I hurried forward through the bushes, making a tremendous noise which sent the frightened eagle to soar above and watch its prey being taken by another.

Instead of a heron, the bird proved to be a Japanese ibis, a type rarely to be found here. It was a magnificent specimen, bigger than a heron, with a blue back and crest, a breast of pale pink and wings of scarlet. When I reached it, it breathed no more as the eagle had ripped its throat just where it joins the breast. Thanks to the bird of prey, I gained for the museum a magnificent and very rare specimen.

After a walk of some miles and after having shot some

ducks, I decided to shoot no more as my bag was already heavy and I had still a long road to camp. But I had no more than made my decision, before I suddenly saw a fox standing among the bushes and carefully eyeing me. By the time I had brought my gun into position, it was already in flight through the bush. Knowing that my shot was really too small for such game, I gave it the second barrel. As the fox lay writhing on the ground, my dog ran towards it but, slowing down when close by, only wagged its tail and came back to me. Trained to hunt birds, it could not understand the pleasure of shooting animals, the more so as this one was a sort of relative.

Meanwhile, I had wandered so long that twilight had set in and, as it was out of question for me to reach camp in time for the evening flight, I decided to hunt single and to find for myself a good cache, with the intention of making my way back to camp by means of the light from the fire, which would be visible for a long distance, and of leaving the game to be fetched the next morning by the Cossack.

Millions of aquatic birds flew and wheeled above the immense Hanka basin. I shot until I had only one cartridge left, which I kept in case of need for a signal. With the help of my dog I collected my spoil, mostly geese, flocks of which came down on the lake so near my ambush that I dropped three from one flock with a single cartridge. After concealing and covering my game, I found that darkness was falling rapidly and that heavy, black clouds were blanketing the sky. It looked as though I should have to light a fire and spend the night away from camp. Resigned to the situation, I roasted me a duck over the coals and was just finishing off my meal with a

bit of chocolate I had in my bag, when suddenly a bright reflection appeared in the distance. I realized that it was our camp and that my companions were throwing bundles of hay into the fire to signal me. Immediately afterwards there came a rifle volley which was also a signal. With a light bag and empty cartridge belt I started back on what nearly proved to be a disastrous journey; for, not being able to discern the path I had come by, I had simply to cross the bogs as best I could and mired so badly in one of them which was covered with a treacherous thin layer of turf that I was besmeared with the black ooze from head to foot and nearly lost my life in the bottomless quagmire. After a time I made out the black wall of the thicket on the far side of the bog and finally fought my way to hard soil. Here I rested a little and then tramped for a long time, skirting the lakes, crossing streams, and forcing my way through the reeds. Finally, I was again among my companions, who had become very anxious about me.

As we sat around the fire I noticed that one of the hunters, a German bookkeeper from the Ussuria railway named Martin Luther, was missing. I learned that he had gone to look for me fearing that, in my ignorance of the marsh, I would be lost or drowned. No one was anxious about him, even though he was a long time coming back.

"Luther knows every puddle and bush; he will not get lost."

As though in answer to this assurance, far-away red flames leapt high in the air; then, lowering themselves to the earth, spread like a golden stream and rushed across the plain. From time to time out of this quickly advanc-

ing sea, tidal waves of flames mounted high, throwing up to the clouds a mass of spray of red and gold.

"This is a *pal* or prairie fire," said one of the hunters. "I hope it will not reach us, as we should have to shift our camp from this favorable spot."

After half an hour, the glares died down, though for a long time a narrow ribbon of fire was visible in the darkness and finally separated itself into smaller tongues that eventually disappeared entirely. About the same time we heard the cracking of reeds and the heavy tread of a man. After a moment the tall, thin form of Luther emerged from the darkness, followed by his old and inexcusably fat dog, Osman.

"Did you see the fire?" asked one of the hunters. "I wonder who could have started it."

"I did," answered Luther, "to dry Osman's tail; for he was very cold."

For a long time we laughed over the good German who was ready to burn all of Hanka and ourselves, to secure for Osman a dry tail.

CHAPTER XXV

THRICE BECKONED BY DEATH

"GENTLEMEN," called Luther next day when at dawn we were about to go to our ambushes, "enough of this hunt! It is growing tedious as there are always ducks and geese and geese and ducks! Yesterday, when tramping the bog looking for Mr. Ossendowski, I made an important discovery—the migration of the roe deer has begun!"

"Is that really so?" asked the old engineer, an experienced hunter. "It seems a little early."

"I myself saw a herd which had slept in the bushes on the west shore of Old Lake," Luther asserted.

After a consultation we moved off in the direction of the lake and settled ourselves in blinds with a sea of bulrushes and osiers before us.

For a whole hour I sat waiting, hearing only a single shot, but finally my turn came as the bushes moved slowly and a pair of deer, suspecting nothing, advanced through the thicket nibbling here and there a bit of grass or a succulent twig. One of the pair fell after my second shot and almost immediately afterwards a group, passing me from the left, contributed another to my bag.

Immense herds of these deer, coming here from the slopes of the Sikhota-Alin and from the various parts of

the Ussuri valley, pass the winter in this sea of grass and bushes around Lake Hanka where on the frozen bog food is easily secured. In the spring time, when the bogs thaw out, the deer return to the forest on the mountain. It was to one of these roads of the migrating deer that Martin Luther took us, and here we created havoc during the whole morning. In the thickets I saw wild boar following the deer, but did not shoot at them as I had only small shot.

From noon to sundown we did not hunt, as the deer remain in the thickets in these afternoon hours. After dinner, following my custom, I roamed over the marshes, avoiding the whereabouts of the deer so as not to frighten them with shooting. On a small pond to which I came, I discovered a big flock of geese among which were some pink pelicans. Anxious to get one of these to add to the very miscellaneous collection of the aquatic birds of Hanka, I carefully approached, but was seen by the geese and had to watch the whole flock make off to a neighboring pond. I started in the same direction, but found a small, rapid river that flowed into Hanka barring my way. It was still almost ice-bound with just a narrow open channel cut through the middle by the rapid current. I found the ice at the sides quite strong, but the opening too wide to clear. Seeing a rick of hay near-by, I decided to use it and had just taken a big armful when the flock I was after rose again and started towards me. From behind the hay I shot several times and finally managed to bring down one of the pelicans which fell in the reeds on the other side of the stream. Taking the hay, I threw it in a thick layer on the water and, hardly touching it with my feet which needed only the slightest

help for the passage, I made the other side of the opening. After finding my bird and throwing it back across the stream, I took a running start for the return journey across my bridge of hay, but this, having had time to get wet, gave no support and sank at once.

I went way under and, when stroking and kicking to make the surface again, felt my head bump against the ice. The thought flashed through my mind that I was under the ice and had not a second to lose and I fortunately remembered also that I had fallen forward under the ice and that therefore the opening was behind me. Pushing myself away from the ice with my hands and struggling with the current, I made across the flow and after some seconds came up in the open. With my head free, I looked about and saw my dog on the ice with its head cocked to one side and gazing at me with astonishment. It was with difficulty that I scrambled out of the swift cold stream upon the slippery ice and in disgust and cold returned to camp. A change by the fire and the brandy and pepper which my companions gave me restored me so well that before sunset I sat again in the blind near the lake, thinking over the details of my dangerous adventure.

I had no luck that evening. I saw some deer, but they were quite too far away for my small shot. As I sat watching, I had the impression for a moment that the tops of the reeds before me were moving imperceptibly. Scrutinizing them carefully, I again felt for a moment that two burning eyes were looking into mine. It seemed to be a lowering gaze, full of hate. A cold shudder ran through my heart. I looked again for those eyes, I could not find them and I thought that it must have been an

illusion. At the same instant Luther, who was posted on my right, shouted loudly:

"A tiger, a tiger!"

I jumped from my cache and had just time to see the long striped body running with immense jumps to the elevation beyond the marsh. I realized then that I had looked into the shining eyes of the terrible beast of prey which was evidently in doubt whether to attack or to slip away. Fortunately for me the coin turned "tails," for otherwise I should have been a lost man. When we investigated the place where I had seen the tiger's eyes, the experienced hunter, Engineer Golovin, explained as he pointed to the tracks of the beast pressed like big saucers into the mud:

"Here the tiger lay in wait, crouching down on all fours ready to spring. Well, you certainly escaped sure death!"

Saying this, he took off his cap and devoutly crossed himself. Thus in twenty-four hours I was three times in danger of death: once with sinking in a bog, again under the ice in the deep and rapid stream, and finally with being crushed by a tiger. Fate did her best this day to give me strong impressions on the borders of Lake Hanka.

CHAPTER XXVI

"ALONE AM I IN THE WORLD, AND ONLY THE SKY IS ABOVE ME"

WHEN we returned from this hunting expedition, I prepared a report for the Geographic Society about all that I had seen, and proposed at the same time a second expedition to Lake Hanka to complete the zoological collections. The journey was to be made in company with a young entomologist of the Museum staff and to begin in a few weeks, when the summer would be in full swing. As my recommendations were accepted in their entirety, in May we were already prepared for our excursion.

The weather was clear and warm and all the trees and bushes were in full leaf or flower. The forest meadows were blazed with yellow lilies, peonies, and dioskoreas, while emerald leaves covered limes, elms, ash, cork-oak, walnuts, oaks, and birches. The apples and wild cherries were in bloom. In the forest thickets at night shone will-o'-the-wisp or fireflies, many of which, crawling through the thick juicy grass in search of food, lighted the way as with lanterns and from everywhere came the dreamy notes of the nightingale. By day, above the flowers brilliantly lighted by the sun, hovered Maack butterflies (*Papilio Maackii*) almost as large as swallows,

and yellow Apollos with white spotted wings. Everywhere life radiated, enjoying the genial warmth of the sun and the hot, mysterious nights.

Hanka's winter dress was changed. The green band of young reeds and bushes joined on the horizon the shining surface of the lake, making of it an immense diamond set in emeralds and the smaller diamonds of surrounding pools. Northward, twisting like a snake along the banks covered with forests, the river Sungacha flowed from Hanka. The countless flocks of geese, ducks, and swan of the early spring no longer wheeled over the sea of reeds and bushes and even the snipe were not there; for each feathered wanderer had already migrated to the north or was keeping close to the summer home he had found in the reeds or in the thicket.

Hunting was out of the question, as these birds were nesting and dreaming of their young. My companion and I now had another sport: he roamed the bush for butterflies, beetles, and other insects; while I, armed with a good English fishing rod and small net, attacked the inhabitants of the lakes and rivers of the Hanka basin. Pike, carp, tench, and especially *kasatka* were my prey. This last is a small, yellowish gray fish about twelve inches long, shaped like a shark, and having on the back and lower fins, sharp spikes. These *kasatka* angered me frequently as they used to raid my bait in whole schools and frightened away the other fish, common that they were themselves and of no use as food or as specimens in our collection.

For a long time I camped near Old Lake, mentioned in an earlier chapter. Seeing constant breaks on the surface of the lake, I decided one evening to make a formidable

attack. I set in the lake a special net, called in Siberia by its Tartar name of *morda.* It is a bag net stretched over wooden rings and having a small aperture in the cone-shaped entrance end, where the cone extends into the net itself.

Even a fairly large fish can find its way into the *morda* by this opening, but cannot leave it, as this entrance tends to close when pressed outward from the interior. A lump of meat or bread is put in the net for bait, the whole thing sunk to the bottom and then tied to stakes or to a tree on the shore.

Having properly set my net, I returned to the camp with the intention of coming back in an hour's time to see if everything was in order. After dragging the *morda* up a bit and finding it very heavy, I drew it out on the shore with difficulty, for I had a fine catch of some rather big salmon of the *keta* or dog-salmon variety, carp, and of course the awful importunate *kasatkas.* When I had once more set the net, I took back to camp the excellent spoil.

Later in the evening, while struggling with gnats and sipping our tea near the fire, I proposed to my companion that we have another look. We built a small fire on the bank to give us light and then approached the moorings of the *morda.* Astonished at not finding the rope, I began searching for the net with a hook fastened to a long pole. As we were puzzled and at a loss what to think, my companion remarked:

"Perhaps an anachronistic ichthyosaurus has got entangled and run away with your net."

"Perhaps," I answered.

We wandered in opposite directions along the shore

looking for traces of the *morda*. Soon my companion called and, as I ran to him, showed me in silence some bushes out in the lake near which the water boiled as something very big splashed about in it. In the moonlight the hoops of the net shone for a second above the surface, but disappeared at once as the water boiled more furiously.

"Well, really, it must be the ichthyosaurus!" laughed my companion.

But I was irritated over the loss of the *morda* and, quickly undressing, took a pole with a hook and a long rope and entered the water. On approaching, I took hold of the hoops of the net, but instantly let them go.

"Please come here and help me," I called to the entomologist. "This is really the ichthyosaurus, and if you will catch it, I shall allow you to put it on a pin and place it under glass."

Nothing loath, he was soon near me. With difficulty we disentangled the net from the bushes and reeds and dragged it to the bank, where we at once built a new fire and then began to investigate.

We soon found out with whom we had to deal—a giant pike nearly six feet long. Putting its head in the net, it had been caught behind the gills and, unable to go in or out, had broken the *morda* loose and dragged it off. The entomologist ripped open the pike with great skill and together we got it up on shore. It weighed no less than 120 pounds. We also found in the net some carp and tench, and it was just this bait which had attracted the unhappy pike that had probably long terrorized the inhabitants of Old Lake.

We returned to camp, burdened with our spoil, and at

once set to work preparing the evening meal. After a tasty tench soup, we sat near the fire chatting over the events of our day. From the elevated location of our camp I looked down over the valley of the Hanka with its dark sea of grass, reeds, and bushes flecked as with bits of looking-glass by the silvery sheen of smaller lakes and the twisting ribbons of rivers and streams, shining in the pale light of the moon.

Suddenly, in one place among the bushes, I saw the flickering glare of a small fire. It was clear then, that we were not alone on the Hanka marshes. Other men had a fire there, sat by it as we did, talked, thought, enjoyed themselves, or longed for something. Sometimes a black silhouette was discernible against the background of the glare, or even screened it altogether. Perhaps someone was hiding on these marshes, for what else could he be doing here? He was neither hunter nor fisherman as it was not time for these sports. The puzzle of this little fire roused my curiosity.

The next morning I went to look up these our neighbors, who surely had not come here to put fish in formalin or butterflies on pins. I followed along a small river which whirled and splashed on its crooked way to Hanka. Sometimes a solitary drake swam out from the reeds, but seeing me, retreated in terror to the thicket where its mate was surely on the nest. Black gulls with white breasts and tails flew over me along the shore, constantly lighting on the sand only to put off again a moment later. Fish broke in quiet coves and on the shallows. A vulture soaring near the silvery, swanlike bits of cloud, whimpered in his search for prey.

Suddenly, through the untrammeled realm of nature,

I heard the measured splashing of water and the low, rich notes of a Russian song:

"Alone I am in the world,
And only the sky is above me. . . ."

I stopped in the reeds and waited. From around a sharp bend in the river a small raft made of four logs bound together with supple osier twigs came swiftly down the current. A bag, evidently of food, with two fishing rods and a kettle, were on the forward end; in the middle stood a big man in torn and dilapidated garments, bare-headed and bare-footed. His face was black from exposure; he had a thick shock of hair and a matted black beard and I noticed an axe stuck in his belt of common rope. The rhythm of his pole measured the cadence of his sad song. As he neared my hiding-place, I stepped out to the shore and hailed him:

"Whither bound, my friend?"

The man gave a start and, before I had time to supplement my question, with a frantic leap was off and up the opposite bank like a scared deer. Picking up his floating pole, I got hold of the raft and made it fast to the bank. I realized full well that all encounters with his own kind were unwelcome and perhaps dangerous for this lonely navigator. For a long time I remained there by the raft watching the slight movements of the reeds across the stream and finally feeling that I was being carefully and stubbornly observed. I knew that it must be so, but for a long time could not find the eyes that scrutinized me. Finally, I espied a matted head looking from the bulrushes, the face frightened and filled with questioning expectancy.

I laughed and called:

"There is no reason to fear me. I am not an official, and you are no concern of mine."

The crouching man still remained silent for a long time, observing me more carefully, but finally asked in a low, hesitating voice:

"Are you telling the truth?"

"If you don't believe me," I answered, "I shall throw you your pole and go away."

I did so and left him.

Returning to the camp, I told my companion about my encounter with this man who prefers to have nobody near him and only "the sky above" him and my lack of success in beginning diplomatic relations with him.

"Oh," said he, "through these marshes and forests you will find in summer whole bands of men at dagger points with society, police, and law."

Soon he started out on his hunt for beetles, while I remained in the camp to make a water-color sketch of the immense pike. Before long I heard a rustle and splashings in the reeds, once I even thought I heard the loud breathing of a man. I smiled, as I knew what it was all about. For a long time this human quarry, probably followed for years by the hawk of the law, lurked about our camp to observe our equipment and settle in his own way just who we were.

When the sun had already set, he emerged from the thicket and stood in the treacherous open fifty paces from me, showing with each movement uncontrollable reflex to escape and hide at the first sign of danger. For some instants he stood silently, watchful like an animal, just looking at me.

"Well, enough of this game," said I. "You tramp in these reeds the whole day. You will finally drown yourself. Come have a seat and take some tea and biscuits."

He hesitated for a moment, then came nearer and sat down on the opposite side of the fire. His right hand was behind his back.

"You are in no danger, my friend," said I, smiling, "so put your axe in your belt. It is not worth while to tire yourself."

He did so as though obeying an order and after a few seconds mumbled:

"It is always better to make sure what sort of men one has as neighbors."

"Quite right," I answered. "Well, have some tea and sugar and biscuits."

"Thank you!" he answered more boldly, beginning to sip his tea and nibbling the smallest bit of sugar he could find in the bag.

I asked no questions and simply waited until he should begin to tell me his story, true or false. Finishing his tea, he started by trying to fool me, stating that he had come here to fish with the intention of salting and transporting his catch to the villages for sale. However, as I had seen on his raft only fishing rods with no supply of salt or barrels, I knew he was romancing and so I said nothing. The comment of silence brought its result. In a moment he scratched his head and blurted out:

"I escaped from the Habarovsk prison. I have done so twice this year. The first time I was retaken, but now I have succeeded."

This was truth.

"Do you plan to spend the summer here?" I asked.

He looked at me with his quick brown eyes and grunted:

"I don't know, I shall see."

I asked no more questions, not wishing to rouse his distrust.

"I shall build my tent near here," he proffered, and a question and a supplication were in his voice.

"Good!" I replied. "We shall be neighbors, and you can help us with fishing and catching butterflies.

"Why not?" was the quick retort. "Will you give me food?"

"Yes."

"Well then, it is settled. And now I shall go and make my camp. Thank you for the tea."

He got up and at once slunk away like a snake in the thicket.

The next day he did not return as he evidently did not want to ask favor from us. These Siberian tramps have a peculiar pride and perhaps he wanted me to go to him. In the evening when a fire was kindled only half a mile away, I went to him. I saw that, on hearing my steps, he quickly bent and picked up his axe . . . to be ready. When he found who it was, he greeted me heartily and invited me to the fire where tea simmered in a smoke blackened kettle.

I studied the camp of my new acquaintance with great interest and curiosity as I saw many things I had not remarked on the raft, for instance a rifle and a soldier's belt full of cartridges.

"Where did you conceal all this?" I asked, indicating the weapon with my eyes. He smiled as he answered:

"Such toys are not carried openly. When I constructed my raft in the mountain forest I hollowed out one of the logs and in it I hid the rifle. It is possible that I shall be obliged to winter in the forest, and what is a man to do in such a pass without a rifle? Who will feed and defend him?"

I spent the whole evening at the tramp's fire. The moon was high in the sky; it was small, sharp, and so bright that the clouds which passed over it could not darken it. The marshy plain was bathed in silvery light and seemed to be lost in silent admiration. The reeds and bushes slept; the lakes and streams were silent; the fish did not splash; and no sound broke this dreaming quiet of nature. Indescribable longings woke in the soul and memories crowded the mind.

I never knew why, here in this marsh, in this waste, as I talked with this unknown tramp, this escaped convict, I felt the urge to tell him of this silent, insistent longing.

"I am here with you in these reeds and meanwhile I know not how my beloved fares. Do you understand? I know nothing beyond this circle of light. How ghastly it is, for perhaps she is ill, in sore need; perhaps . . . my thoughts reach in vain for her."

I whispered these words, fearing instinctively to mar this moment of deep, pure silence—whispered them almost inaudibly, thinking aloud, rather; and I was sure that the tramp seated opposite me did not hear my low words. But he at once raised his matted head and looked directly at me with his widely opened eyes, in which the fire kindled red lights. Then a strange and even tragic thing occurred. I saw at once that from these eyes looked out despair and deeply hidden sufferings and after-

wards bloody drops came from his eyes and disappeared in his thick beard. I realized that the tramp was weeping and that the red lights of the fire mirrored themselves in his tears, always crystal clear and sincere though they flow from the eyes of saint or criminal; for "a tear is the sacrifice of the soul in pain," as an Eastern poet has phrased it. He wept for a long time with the sobs shaking his body and through his tears he began to give out word upon word, sentence upon sentence, in a broken, tragic voice:

"You have spoken the truth, the real truth. I . . . I also was thinking the same at this very moment; because, you see, it was thus: I loved a woman and it was through her that I went to prison. Then I escaped for her, but another one who loved her betrayed me. The Cossacks took me. Again I was in prison and longing for her; I escaped once more but did not find her for she had gone away. The traitor, learning that I was free, fled, and they told me that he was hiding somewhere here on the Hanka marshes. I came to look for him and to settle accounts; but the longing gnaws at my heart and dries my soul. . . . You are right. . . . Perhaps it is not worth while . . . because possibly not even a shadow of remembrance of me has remained with her."

His whole body shook and I thought that life is a capricious thing: sometimes it buries everything in mystery, sometimes it lays open the most jealously concealed page of its book never before revealed. I understood perfectly why this tramp came here to seek revenge for a treason, for the separation from the beloved. Everything was as comprehensible, simple, and clear as this

moon in the sky, as the silent forest, as these tears of the tramp.

He returned with me to our camp and in the morning helped me about the lakes, fishing and preserving the specimens in formalin for me or chasing butterflies or crawling after beetles for my entomologist friend. We remained on the marsh five days longer. On the third day the tramp did not come at the usual hour, but he appeared before evening, tired, hair and beard more matted than ever, and with garments covered with a thick layer of mud and traces of plants. He had an ugly, determined look.

"I found him today in the bulrushes by the Goose Stream. He had hidden there and even had no fire, but I had seen a man at dawn today crawling along the high bank. It was *he*. I have already been to his hiding place. I crawled like a snake and observed everything well. He has a revolver, a rifle, and an axe. Tomorrow I shall go for him."

He took tea with us and went away.

The next morning as we were looking over our collection, we heard a solitary shot. There was no sound after it. The tramp did not come again.

Finally, a Cossack came for us, put all our things in his wagon, and took us to the station. While walking up and down on the platform waiting for our train, we noticed some people gathered round a young man with an attractive bright face who was relating something to the listening Cossacks and the railway employees. As we approached, the young man was energetically shaking his head and saying:

"I was afraid of him as he was a convict. I had gone to Lake Hanka and was seated in the reeds when he crawled up and sprang at me with his axe like a tiger. I shot him with my revolver. He splashed in the Goose Stream and went for a cross and a grave."

The tale sickened me and I turned away to gaze back towards the quiet marsh with the picture of the weeping tramp and the circle of fire light on the reeds ever before my blurred eyes.

In 1921 after my long journey through Central Asia, Fate led me once more into the Ussurian country. I was not far from Hanka, which my grateful hunter's and fisherman's heart could never forget. I visited Rasdolnaya, where I had previously met the courageous Kudiakoffs; I was in Vladivostok, where the feeble Russian culture met the worst elements of China and Korea; but this time it was not for scientific study and pleasure. I wanted to make sure whether the anti-Bolshevik movement which began here was a serious thing and what one could expect of it.

I found the usual Russian struggles between parties, intrigues, the threat of civil war, and the clear presage of the inevitable disaster which befell the region a year later.

This beautiful, rich, appealing Ussurian country full of the charm of mysterious forests; the land of the lordly tiger, of the red wolf, and the panther: the feeding ground of the migratory black Australian swan, of the Indian flamingo, of the Japanese ibis, and of the Chinese crane—this land is today being spoiled as a habitation for

normal human beings by the wild and lawless bands of Red Partisans, drunk with blood and brandy.

A true culture, wise and human, ought to enter here and make of these mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, and fields a big forge of happiness for society and humanity, in order that the favor of the Creator, who, according to the legend, gave to the Ussuri a full measure of everything possessed by other countries and continents, be not lost.

Part III
THE BANISHED ISLAND

Part III

THE BANISHED ISLAND

CHAPTER XXVII

THE INACCESSIBLE SHORE

THE big island of Sakhalin stretches along the Siberian coast from the Straits of La Perouse to the mouth of the Amur River and is separated from the Asiatic mainland by the Tartar Passage which ranges from twenty to eighty miles wide.

Russian ships used to sail from Odessa to the western shore of Sakhalin two or three times a year, ships that wore a strange appearance. No passengers were visible on the decks, only a dark flag with some letters on it flew at the masthead. If anyone could have boarded this mysterious ship somewhere near Colombo or Shangai, he would have been struck by the sound of clanking chains and by the continuous buzz below decks that would have reminded him of some enormous bee-hive—only these bees were not free insects, able to fly in any direction they might choose, but were men with manacles on feet and hands, often riveted in lots of four or five to one long chain, living in iron cages, and guarded by the most brutal soldiers, rifles in hands.

These steamers transported from Odessa to Sakhalin the worst criminal prisoners, murderers, robbers, incendiaries, and recidivists. In Odessa the Government administration assembled criminals sentenced to banishment and despatched them to Sakhalin, this place of eternal detention and *katorga,* that is, of forced hard labor. This sea journey of these chained men and women shut up in iron cages recalled the most terrible scenes of Dante's Inferno. Storms at sea, heat under the tropics, cold in the North Pacific, dirt surpassing anything the most vivid imagination could picture, persecution of these helpless victims—all this took toll of their ranks by hundreds, a result considered desirable from the Government standpoint, as it diminished costs and saved trouble.

Finally, these ships would enter the Tartar Passage and anchor off one of the two administrative centers: Dué and Alexandrovsk. The boats were lowered and the manacled passengers, tired and ill, with their poor belongings were put ashore.

The sea is usually rough in the Passage. When the waves knocked the boats about, not infrequently two prisoners chained together fell in the water and usually no one was very particular about pulling them out. Bundles and boxes of all sorts of rags, boots, tobacco, and matches were often soaked or even claimed by the waves. Landing was particularly difficult and dangerous, as the waves broke over the rocks along the unprotected shore; for the Russian Government, during all the time of its domination over Sakhalin, had never constructed a harbor or even a protected landing-place.

The pitiful passengers were pushed on shore at the point of the bayonet and marched to the principal office

of the prison administration of one of the three State villages where they were registered and told off to special prisons and to their particular forced labor, where they often were chained to a wagon or a wheelbarrow. From this moment the village had a new inhabitant. These villages were all of the same type, as they were composed of the prison administration, a church, soldiers' barracks, some little shops, and several prison buildings, gruesome and terrible, as they were full of longing, sadness, and the torture of thousands of men erased from the ranks of society, and really having no human or civic rights.

Except for these colonies, the whole island was almost a wilderness—I say "almost" as there were also some mines of excellent coking coal, to study which I visited this cursed island. Near these mines, worked entirely by convict labor, were makeshift quarters for the prisoners. A small number of colonists existed also in various parts of the island, but of these I shall speak later on.

The coal mines, administered very carelessly and very badly, were located near Dué, Onor, Alexandrovsk, and on the rivers Mgatch and Nayasi. Now a part of these magnificent deposits of coal in Sakhalin has been ceded by the Treaty of Portsmouth to Japan, who has put great store in the riches of the Island, called in Japanese "Karafuto," and has carried out various railway, harbor, and other development work there.

I heard much from the ex-convict colonists of the island about the terrible accidents in these mines where hundreds of chained workers, often attached to wheelbarrows, cars, or pumps, perished through fires, explosions and the caving in of galleries. Whole volumes of the awful stories

could be compiled, picturing the carelessness and technical ignorance of the prison administration which brought disaster to hundreds of the forced workers.

The terrible conditions of life and work, the indescribably wearing influence of the rigorous climate, the madness of longing and hopelessness, goaded the prisoners to rebellion or flight. In both cases the administration employed special troops from a battalion to which were sent the worst and most unmanageable soldiers from all Siberia and even from European Russia. This criminal battalion was a sort of military *katorga* as the discipline and regulations were so terrible and severe that the soldiers very often committed suicide. But the majority did their best to get away as soon as possible from the accursed island, and consequently used every effort to gain the favor of their officers and of the prison administration. The best policy for these soldiers was a relentless severity and cruelty to the prisoners, a cruelty that surpassed all human imagination, especially when it was a question of punishing recaptured convicts or of smothering a revolt in the mines or in the prisons.

Men guilty of strikes or rebellion and recaptured convicts were punished by an increase of work and a more severe prison régime, but before all this they were whipped. Often this punishment was the last in the life of the prisoner, and after it a new grave was dug in the prison cemetery.

The condemned was turned over to the chastiser-executioner. These Sakhalin executioners formed a special caste, hated by everybody. They were chosen by the administration from among the most debased of the prisoners and were placed in separate quarters, as in the

common ones they would be instantly killed by the other inhabitants of the *katorga,* who loathed them.

These executioners carried out all sentences, not only upon the prisoners, but upon soldiers or even upon officials convicted of stealing from the Government treasury. They did their work thoroughly as they received a money reward and a shortening of their term after which they were given a comparative liberty and a right to have their own houses on the island and to become colonists. But it is worthy of remark that during the last twenty-five years, only one of the executioners profited by this right, while all the others remained in prison, being rightly afraid of the vengeance of the other convicts, each of whom was pledged to carry out the sentence of their secret general tribunal against the executioners even if the avenging prisoner had never suffered at the hands of the chastiser.

The condemned received from fifteen to three hundred strokes with willow rods boiled before use in sea water. The fifteenth stroke was supposed always to cut the skin and draw blood. If no blood appeared, the official overseeing the execution accused the executioner of indulgence and sentenced him to a beating. The sticks lacerated and tore the skin and flesh from the back and feet of the victim as he lay stretched on a bench. When he fainted, he was taken to the hospital where his wounds were allowed to heal a little; and, if he had not received the number of strokes to which he was sentenced, the whipping was finished in a second installment during which often death ensued. The cruelty and persecution of the prisoners surpassed the most vivid and morbid imagination. All this took place far from the central Government authori-

ties to whom only vague rumors came that commanded no attention from them.

It was only when the well-known Russian philanthropist, Dr. Haase, visited the Sakhalin *katorga* in Onor and later gave a number of public lectures and wrote articles in newspapers and reviews about it, that some reforms were instituted; for instance, the heavy Akatoui manacles weighing almost thirty pounds were replaced by lighter ones, called for this reformer "Haase" manacles.

But the osier sticks continued to whistle through the air and lacerate the bodies of the inhabitants of the cursed island, these men without rights. Finally, when the Russian writer, Doroshevitch, visited the *katorgas* and wrote his book *Sakhalin,* then some attention was turned to the life and fate of these pitiful islanders and some slight modifications made in the number of strokes, and less severe gradations of punishments were instituted. This system was in vogue until the Russo-Japanese war, in 1905, when the Russian Government, fearing that the Japanese would take the island and mobilize the prisoners into dangerous detachments of revengers and let them loose on the shores of the mainland, transported all the convicts to the prisons in Nikolaievsk on the Amur, to Habarovsk, Blagoveschensk, and Vladivostok. But the walls and fences of these living sepulchers could not, however, keep in during these first months of the war those who had gone through the Sakhalin hell. Almost all of them escaped and organized themselves into bands of freebooters and began to roam the gold mines on the Lena, Bodaibo, Zeya, Kerbi, and in the Amur country

so full of virgin forests, unknown mountain passages, and treacherous marshes.

Many of these robbers perished, shot by their Cossack pursuers, or were hanged; yet many survived until the Russian Revolutionary Government of Prince Lvoff and Kerensky granted amnesty to all who had been sentenced by the Tsar's tribunals. Then these men from the souls of whom the Tsar's prisons had erased all human characteristics, came to the towns and for a time lay in wait, like the wild beasts they were, expecting easy prey. Their time soon came and brought them an excellent opportunity. When the authority in Russia was seized by the Bolsheviks, they called these half-men, half-beasts to execute their bloody sentences and put them at the head of the revolutionary tribunals, of the political inquiry-commissions and of the all-powerful *Cheka*, so that these whose bodies were slashed and torn by the salted rods eagerly embraced the opportunity to avenge themselves upon the representatives of the Tsar's Government and society.

The Communistic Soviet Government in Petrograd and Moscow calmly reinstituted the Tsar's policy and looked indulgently upon cruelties, which differed from those of the old régime only in that the blood flowed not from the bodies of some thousands of criminals and socially-dangerous degenerated, but from those of the three million intelligentsia, counting many professors, organizers, writers, artists, and heroes of the last two wars. As all these openly or tacitly criticized the anti-cultural Bolshevik system and were considered pernicious and dangerous to the new Communistic Russian tsars, the surviving victims of the bloody benches and rods of Sakhalin

adapted to the intelligentsia in ways a hundred times more bloody, this corrective system they had learned in the prisons of Dué, Alexandrovsk, and Onor.

History repeats itself—crime will always find for itself a judgment and a punishment.

This was and is the case in Soviet Russia.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AMONG THE HAIRY AINOS

ONE summer I arrived on the ship *Aleut* in Sakhalin to carry on geological and chemical investigations. I was sent off with my luggage in a small boat and with difficulty landed on the shore near the village of Dué, where I was met by the local doctors, who, as the more cultured inhabitants of the place, had received orders from the Governor-General to take care of me.

I put up at the house of one of these doctors. During lunch a soldier came and summoned the doctor to the office. In half an hour my host returned and, excusing himself for his absence, calmly continued his meal. To a question of his wife, he answered between a gulp of brandy and a morsel of food, without the least sign of feeling or emotion:

"They killed an old prisoner under the rods and called me to certify to his death."

I shuddered from indignation at hearing a cultivated man speak so calmly of the murder of a helpless prisoner beyond the protection of the law. It appeared so monstrous to me that I rebelled at the idea of living with such a type and, although I had been so badly shaken up in the Japan Sea and in the Tartar Passage that I would have welcomed a quiet bit of comfort for a few days, I decided to start immediately on the road.

By the next day I had already secured two wagons with good Government horses and three assistants such as few travelers could ever boast, as all three were murderers who had committed their crimes not a great while before. Two of them acted as coachmen, while the third was to help take care of me and my luggage.

This man was a small Georgian, quick as a snake, with black hair and a dark face dominated by big brown, fiery eyes, which never twinkled, but were always as watchful as those of a beast. His name was Karandashvili and he was a well-known robber chief who had systematically preyed upon the Government post-offices and mails. Later, during Bolshevik days, his name became famous in various parts of Russia as a cruel and courageous leader of Red Partisan bands which the Soviet Government employed against the armies of Admiral Kolchak and Generals Beloff and Grishin. I am not entirely sure of his identity, but the description of the personality and the ways of the Red Karandashvili tallied closely with the man who, as a Sakhalin prisoner, was my help and defender on the island of banishment. I carried away a good remembrance of him as an assistant, for he was honest, willing, polite, and very useful during the journey through the wilds of Sakhalin.

I followed the road running through the middle of the island. I say a "road" as it thoroughly deserved the name. The authorities with prison labor had hewn a way through the forest from the north to the south and constructed a good road fifteen feet wide with wooden bridges over the small rivers and streams, and good stone work or corduroying through the marshes.

This road was used by the officials largely for the

despatch of soldiers in pursuit of escaped prisoners who generally made for the northwestern coast where it was easier to reach the continent across the narrowed passage. The soldiers using the road could head off the fugitives and ambush them when they were attempting to leave the island.

The place where the fugitives usually went was the little village of Pogibi, situated at a point where the passage was little more than twenty miles wide. Once on the continent, the fugitive could conceal himself in the thick *taiga* of the Amur country and slowly make his way to the town of Nikolaievsk, whose suburbs were inhabited by all sorts of adventurous elements willing to conceal these strangers with dark and bloody pasts and even using them at times to further their own ends. The village of Pogibi, "the place of perdition," was largely made up of emigrants from the suburbs of Nikolaievsk, making their living by fishing, contraband, and facilitating, for a good price, the escape of the Sakhalin prisoners. The fugitives usually paid by killing and robbing the enemies or rivals of their patron, transporting goods for him from the island to the continent, and making dangerous expeditions to the center of the island or to the seal islands in Patience Bay where seals were killed and their pelts brought to the continent for sale.

The Government road went just to Pogibi. whither my wagons proceeded under the command of Karandashvili.

Between Dué and Pogibi I came across some good gold workings of the colonists in the beds of small rivers. They were washing sands that were not very high in values, but had generally big areas. It seemed to me impracticable to be working these low-value sands by

manual methods, but that dredges and excavators would yield excellent results. However, the colonists worked diligently and washed considerable gold which they were obliged to turn in exclusively to the prison administration that paid them half the fixed price for the unrefined dust.

Magnificent forests covered the ranges of not very high mountains which traversed the island from the north to the south. In places the forest was quite virgin, becoming wilder near the eastern shore which was entirely without inhabitants. Even from my wagon as we followed this highroad, I saw many small and large wild animals. Squirrels jumped among the branches of the cedars and pines, several times polecats and foxes crossed our path, and at night I often heard the short bark of wolves. Once, as I was crossing a small stream, I saw the antlers of an elk in some thick bushes. As the animal did not move, even when we began to shout and whistle, I was greatly astonished and asked my driver what could be the reason for it.

"In summer Sakhalin suffers under a terrible plague of biting beetles, flies, gnats, and mosquitoes which almost eat the cattle alive. Calves and foals, if not covered with linen or mats, will die from these insects soon after their birth. The wild animals suffer also terribly as the flies bore holes in their hides and deposit their eggs in them, which develop into larvae and as such torture the beasts almost to madness. The animals hide in the thickets where the flies and beetles are not so numerous and seldom leave the forests."

This was the explanation given me by my driver and he spoke with such earnestness that it was easy to understand what a plague these insects were. After sundown

I learned by actual experience the seriousness of the pest, but now, in spite of the coachman's tale, I could not resist the hunter's instinct to have a try at the elk. I left the wagon and hid on the steep bank of the river, sending Karandashvili and one of the drivers to approach the elk from the other side and force it out from the thicket. After waiting only a little while, I heard the cries of the beaters followed by the noise of breaking twigs and of hoofs on the stony river bank. I made ready to shoot and anxiously raised my head above my covert to find the elk standing only a hundred yards away, listening attentively and turning its long ears. As I leveled my rifle and aimed, the beast spied me at once, scrutinized me for a moment and then, bending its antlered head, started to attack me. My shot stopped it halfway and in a few moments my banditti arrived, skinned it, and took the antlers, together with the excellent joints and steaks.

"Well!" cried the Georgian vivaciously, always ready to be enthusiastic. "This will give us excellent, fresh meat. And now, Sir, look at the skin."

As he raised and stretched it before me, I saw that it was full of holes just as though some one had riddled the animal with enormous buckshot.

"These are the holes made by the larvae of the flies and beetles," said my driver.

As we worked along the road to the north, I several times hunted the game birds of the forest, mountain-cock, heath-cock, hazel-hen, and white partridges. I met great numbers of these birds everywhere and found them far from timorous.

In the autumn I saw near Alexandrovsk the hunting of heath-cock with a stuffed bird, a method quite current

in Siberia. My acquaintance, Engineer Gorloff, had a bird made of dark cloth with two twisted bits of strong paper stuck in for a tail and two red stripes on the head to imitate the markings of the male. When completed, the decoy was placed on a high pole that was then fastened in the top of a birch tree. A little blind of branches was made for the hunters and two mounted soldiers began beating the forest to frighten the heath-cock which perch in the morning up in the trees.

When these flushed birds were in flight and discovered a cock sitting calmly in the top of our birch tree, they flew around the decoy and gradually settled in the tops of the neighboring trees, quarreling and fighting for places. When they were all seated, Gorloff began a slaughter. Starting with the birds in the lowest limbs, he killed them one after the other, for the heath-cock is such a stupid bird that you can go under them and shoot a treeful before they break.

When I was traveling with Karandashvili, the last shoals of fish were just entering the rivers to spawn. My companion said that fish were already scarce, but it did not appear so to my European eyes, as I saw the fins and backs of those swimming up stream pushed half out of water by the masses swimming below them. We took some specimens with a twisted cedar branch used as a scoop and several times I shot very successfully, as after each shot some of them, benumbed by the concussion, rose to the surface on their backs and Karandashvili dragged them to the bank with a pole.

But we were not the only fishermen, for an immense brown bear sat like a dark stone near the water and from time to time netted them out with its monstrous paw.

It had strange tastes, as it ate only the heads and left the rest of the fish for the birds of prey, which hovered like beggars at the castle in olden days to wait for the master of the forest to finish his meal.

All these fish were of the same variety, the *keta,* or eastern Asiatic dog-salmon, weighing from ten to twenty-five pounds. At this time of year I rarely saw any sturgeon, as they spawn before the salmon.

In the central part of the island I came upon the first camps of the primitive natives of Sakhalin and of the northern islands of Japan, the Hairy Ainos. They are a people of slight stature, strangely narrow feet, and with a great deal of hair on the head, face, and breast. Though the Ainos are generally hunters and fishermen, in the center of the island some tribes have constructed houses and undertaken the cultivation of the soil and the rearing of cattle.

The Aino hunters use only traps and snares for the smaller animals, and pits with sharpened stakes for the larger ones.

Along the northernmost shores of the island near Cape Elizabeth, the Ainos ply their sea fishing in their big boats made of bark and sealskins, going far into the Okhotsk Sea, which never freezes. They are excellent and experienced harpoon throwers, taking in this way seals, walruses, and even whales.

Seal and walrus killed in the sea sink immediately and are lost to the hunter. To obviate this, the Ainos fasten the harpoon to a long shaft or pole made of strong sticks tied together which forms a sort of fantastically elongated lance. Armed with this, the Aino creeps up in his boat near the seals and walruses lying on the ice fields and

throws the harpoon which the animal in diving carries down, together with the long shaft and the rope tied to it. After a time, the buoyancy of the pole tires the animal and brings it back to the surface, where the Aino finishes it.

It is impossible to imagine better fishermen than these Ainos. It really seems as if their black, mysterious eyes penetrate the depths of the sea and see shoals of fish swimming in different directions. I went with them in their boats out on the Okhotsk Sea and had full opportunity to admire their ability as fishermen. The sea is to them like their own pockets and apparently nothing can fool them: the smallest signs, such as the color of the water, floating seaweeds, small sea animals, and even the shapes of the waves are all an open book to the Aino. Following the schools of whales, they go far from land and not infrequently perish during the terrible storms which sometimes visit the always boisterous Okhotsk Sea. Many a fugitive prisoner from Sakhalin has found a secure refuge in an Aino boat and working for them, has made his way to the Shantar Islands from which by different and always adventurous routes, he has reached the continent to fall into the human sea of the towns, where he has disappeared like a drop of rain in the ocean. Calm, hospitable, and always well-disposed, the Ainos are very courageous and bear splendidly the fatigue and severe trials which the sea and this forbidding island impose upon them.

These people have no bread, but use in its place *youkola* or dried fish, which is the food of all the natives of northeastern Siberia. This staple is prepared from herring and mackerel, immense schools of which migrate

twice a year through the Okhotsk Sea. It serves as regular diet of not only the men but of the pack dogs which the Ainos use for winter traffic.

The Ainos are primarily heathen, shamanists, and on the breasts of their wizards and shaman-doctors, I have seen the magic signs or *mcntrams* which I have since met in northern Thibet.

When I visited one of their camps near Cape Elizabeth I observed a very interesting phenomenon. A great field of dead fish, more than half a mile wide and some miles in length, was borne toward the Cape from the direction of the southern point of Kamchatka and the northern Kurile Islands. Clouds of all sorts of birds accompanied this procession; herds of seal and even small whales followed, feeding on it. When I studied these fish, I found that they were covered with a sort of white must, with the gills especially full of it. This must was very like the spots and lines in the throats of persons suffering from diphtheria and it seemed most probable that the epidemic started in the gills which were bloodshot and completely covered with this growth.

An old fisherman told me that this phenomenon had been known for a long time in the Okhotsk Sea, but that in recent years it had occurred more frequently. He told me also that the *shamans* would this year offer a human sacrifice to the evil spirit which had its abode in the seaweed of the northern sea. The Ainos were to choose from among themselves a young man and a young girl, to take them with gifts in a big boat and to convey them to the open ocean, from where they were to go north in a little sailboat to seek the place indicated by the *shamans* as the abode of the bad spirit of the sea.

"If they find him," said the old fisherman, "they will offer him the gifts, and he will give them a good wind to bring them back to their native island again."

So spoke the old Aino, but I had no doubt that before the young pair would find the "spirit of the sea," the waves of the northern Pacific would engulf them together with their boat and its sail of sealskin.

CHAPTER XXIX

WITH THOSE WHO CAME OUT OF HELL

IN the northern part of Sakhalin I visited some villages inhabited by convicts who had been released from prison and allowed to have their own houses.

The most northern of these was the compound of Lisakoff. The central building was a well-constructed house of cedar logs with large windows and a high protecting fence around it; it had three rooms, a kitchen and a large hall. As we arrived, the host chained up his barking and howling dogs, let us in and then barred the door carefully. He was a short, broad-shouldered peasant, with a long, well-kept beard already streaked with white, short hair, and a lean, ascetic face. He never looked into my eyes and spoke always in a soft voice, little in keeping with his severe appearance. He took me to an orderly clean room containing a white wooden bed and table, several chairs, and a large bench covered with a bearskin. He was very polite and hospitable and presented me to his family. His wife was a tall, thin woman with hair plainly dressed and parted in the middle and large eyes of no special color but cold and watchful, and with a strangely fresh, red mouth whose lips were strongly compressed. When she smiled, big white even teeth were visible. This couple had a son of seven whom

she called Mishka, red as a flame, quick, and with merry blue eyes.

I spent some days in the house of these people as I studied the neighborhood looking for traces of petroleum in the marshes and lakes, for I had been told by the authorities in Dué that oil was to be found here. This gave me the opportunity to observe the life of this far from usual couple.

First of all, I remarked from the very moment of our arrival that the host never parted with his axe which he carried continually in his belt. Also, I could not fail to notice that Karandashvili and the two drivers looked at Lisakoff with eyes full of hate and sometimes exchanged between themselves significant glances. One day when I was going through the forest with my Georgian, I began to speak about Lisakoff. For a long time he returned me evasive answers but, seeing that I would not be baffled, began with contracted brow and an unusually vindictive voice, this extraordinary tale.

"Lisakoff is an old convict. He escaped several times from the island and received three hundred strokes and was branded also. The life in the *katorga* was very hard for him so that he rebelled a long time against it; but finally he surrendered. It was bad, mean, vile."

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He became an executioner!" exclaimed Karandashvili, clenching his fists and gnashing his teeth. "He has been condemned to death by the convicts. He was once attacked and had several ribs and the bones of his hand broken; but he succeeded in escaping and then the authorities transferred him to quarters with the other executioners. However, Lisakoff was the best of them, as he

never tried to punish unduly the condemned and often tried to spare the old and feeble prisoners for which leniency he was himself several times whipped by the authorities."

"Then why do you hate him so?" I asked again; "I saw how you looked at him."

"The sentence of death hangs always over Lisakoff's head. It is true that we hate him, for to be an executioner is a great infamy for a convict. Lisakoff was merciful only because he was afraid; but this will not save him, and he must perish, sooner or later. This is why he settled here in this solitary corner, as the convicts rarely come this far."

I looked sharply into Karandashvili's eyes and he at once lowered his eye-lids. It was such an eloquent movement that I decided to watch my banditti very closely.

One circumstance in the house also attracted my attention; the fact that Lisakoff and his wife, who had also served a sentence of ten years for poisoning, never talked together. Sometimes they spoke a few words and then were again silent and thoughtful, he never raising his glance and she looking straight before her with staring eyes full of animal watchfulness and terror and seeming to penetrate everybody.

Too many terrible events had come into the lives of these people; their tortures through many years had been too crushing and blackening to allow them to lay bare before each other their souls full of unholy thoughts. They lived from day to day, avoiding the black chamber of remembrance, and 'reft of hope for the future. How could these two creatures have hope in the future, when

they had been made husband and wife by order of the authorities and had no right to leave this island?

They had a son, it is true, and ought to have been able to expect a better fate for him; but even this was denied them, as the children of ex-prisoners were not willingly received on the continent where they were regarded as the scum of mankind, as beings belonging to a caste marked with infamy forever. Thus the parents knew that this free citizen, born here in Sakhalin, would surely be drawn into the stormy, degenerate life of the accursed island of banishment and torture and would sooner or later find himself within the prison walls.

As we were sitting at the dinner table that evening, the door suddenly opened and in came a man, or, rather a specter of a man. He was in rags, covered with wounds and blisters, with bruised and torn, bare feet, and with feverishly burning eyes which showed that for a long time they had known no sleep. He entered, stopped near the door and said in a hoarse voice:

"*Saryn*[1] . . . . Water!"

The host and my men jumped to their feet.

"They are after you?" was the unanimous question.

"Lieutenant Nosoff," whispered the fugitive. "They are already near."

A long silence followed. Then Lisakoff arose and, bending his head even lower than usual, said:

"Come with me!"

They went out. Lisakoff returned in an hour's time covered with mud, his garments torn in several places as if he had been walking through massed thorny undergrowth.

[1] In prison jargon, a watchword used by fugitives.

"Already?" Karandashvili asked.

He silently nodded his head and seated himself at the table. Some minutes afterwards we heard the sound of horses' hoofs followed by the loud knocks at the courtyard door which made us shudder.

"Open, open!" came in commanding tones.

The host started for the door, but his wife stopped him, saying in a frightened voice:

"Change your clothes and conceal them well. I shall open the gate myself."

They both went out and in a very few moments, the heavily booted soldiers entered. The foremost was a little redhaired, freckled officer, Nosoff. He stopped, looked sharply at us, and asked in a lisping voice:

"Where is Lisakoff?"

My men were silent, showing servile fear in every line of their pose.

I had to answer for them:

"He went out for a moment, but will be back at once."

"Who are you?" Nosoff demanded, looking me over from crown to feet.

"And who are you?" I retorted. "You wear officer's epaulets, but you speak like a boor. Surely you must have stolen these epaulets in order to force people to respect you and to be polite to you."

He was disconcerted and bent his head, while in his eyes lurked the fear endemic in this island. He saluted and introduced himself:

"Lieutenant Nosoff of the Pogibi garrison."

The mutual introduction was completed by my showing him my documents with the signatures of the Governor-General and other important officials.

He was completely subdued, but only for a time; for, after having taken tea with *arraka* which he had brought with him, he again became boorish and impudent. He spoke of the convicts only as dogs and rabble and without warning struck one of the drivers who came too near to him. I was astonished to see that this small, thin man, with a single blow toppling over my big driver, who appeared strong as an oak.

"Handcuff everyone," Nosoff suddenly ordered.

The command was quickly executed and in a moment everyone except myself was manacled, even little Mishka, who was amused by their clinking as he continually shook his little fists.

"Be silent, you puppy," Nosoff shouted at him with a heavy shove of his foot.

My helpers bent their heads lower while the parents glowered with hate on the vicious officer.

"Search the whole house," was Nosoff's next command.

Some moments later one of the soldiers brought in Lisakoff's garments and boots which he had found in the barn.

"Was anybody here?" the officer asked Lisakoff.

"No," was the answer.

Nosoff smiled forebodingly and looked at me. It looked as though he was going to question me, but he evidently thought better of it or perhaps did not wish to be so direct about it.

"Have you seen anybody?" he asked of the hostess. "And you, and you, and you?"

Question followed upon question, but always the same answer.

"No."

None of the convicts betrayed the fugutive concealed by Lisakoff, even little Mishka piping his "No" and shaking his shock of red hair.

"Very well," sneered Nosoff. "Take this puppy and give him fifty strokes of the whip!"

My intervention was of no avail as the officer justified himself by showing me a little book of regulations for the garrison containing the laws and punishments fixed for fugitives and those who harbor or assist them.

As the soldiers seized Mishka and dragged him out into the yard, his parents turned pale and a nervous spasm contracted the mother's face. When the despairing cries of the child were heard, Lisakoff raised his brooding eyes to the officer and whispered.

"Don't beat him, Lieutenant, don't beat the child! I will tell everything."

The sobs of the mother and the clinking of the chains of the others, accompanied this whisper from the father.

"Hey!" roared the officer. "Enough!"

As the soldiers brought the weeping, groaning Mishka into the room I went out for a troubled stroll, not wishing to assist at the inquiry or to be called as a witness.

When I returned, I found a great change in the house.

Lisakoff was in bed in a fever, crying, groaning, and cursing. He had received one hundred and fifty strokes of a heavy whip which had striped his back horribly and cost him much blood. My men had each received fifty strokes and were unable to travel farther with me. The officer took away with him Lisakoff's wife as an eye-witness of the arrival at their house of the fugitive Vlasenko, whom the soldiers had found in the bushes of a marsh less than a mile from the compound. Little

Mishka, deadly afraid, was crying his heart out in a dark corner of the room, not daring to approach his delirious father.

I spent several days dressing the wounds of my host and of my men, but finally had to leave without them, not for the north, but back to Pogibi in order to secure a new helper and drivers.

On my arrival there I was received by the Captain, chief of the local garrison, to whom I recounted the events of the past few days and the boorishness and cruelty of Nosoff. The Captain looked grave and said in a decisive manner:

"We have definite regulations for the treatment of convicts and cannot change them. Moreover, you do not know these people; they are animals and you will soon learn this for yourself."

My intervention in this Lisakoff matter had the worst of results for myself, inasmuch as the authorities at Pogibi so arranged matters that I could not secure men to continue my expedition. I had sent a messenger to Dué to the Chief of the prison administration who issued a definite order to the Captain to assist me. All this took about a week's time and I profited by it to study the inhabitants of this colony, at that time the most northern of all Sakhalin. The population was composed of former convicts who had finished their term of imprisonment or who had been amnestied by the Tsar and all sorts of elements from the mainland. These latter were principally adventurers with motley and mysterious pasts, who busied themselves with fishing expeditions in small sailers to the island of St. Jonas in the Okhotsk Sea where they caught fish and hunted seal and whales; also

with smuggling contraband, illicit distilling, trading with the natives, and driving a business in transporting fugitives from Sakhalin to the continent. I found here Russians, Armenians, Georgians, Tartars, Greeks, and Turks. This international gang existed as an awful tumor, as a disgusting parasite on the body of the unhappy inhabitants of the accursed island of torture, tears, and persecution.

The fifth day of my stay in Pogibi I received a visit from the wife of Lisakoff, whose eyes were now even more fixed and despairing, her lips more tragically compressed, and her face as white as chalk. Following the usage among the convicts, she sat for a long time in silence, ordering her thoughts and arranging in her mind her sentences. Finally she said:

"I was allowed to return home after having made my deposition. A merchant I know loaned me a horse and carriage. Halfway between Pogibi and our compound I met your people, one of whom fled into the forest while the other two came to meet me. When I asked about you and heard that you were already in Pogibi, I had a foreboding presentiment and urged on my horse so that I reached home early in the evening."

As she spoke she groaned and spasmodically clenched her hands.

"I found our compound entirely burned, and realized that Karandashvili had carried out the sentence against the former executioner, my husband. Searching the ruins I found his body with the throat cut and the skull smashed. The little one I could not find. Then I began to search outside and finally discovered him in some bushes near the marsh, where he lay dead, with his head crushed by

an axe. Evidently he had fled and the revengers, afraid of a witness, overtook and murdered him. All our possessions are burned, even the dogs perished on their chains. What, Sir, am I to do now?"

"Deposit a plaint before the tribunal against the persons you suspect. You can count on me. I shall tell all I have observed about these men. I shall also speak for you to the Governor-General."

For a long time this silent woman, so resigned and cold-blooded in the recital of her ghastly tragedy, sat silent in my room. Receiving no reply I asked:

"Well, when will you begin your action?"

As she raised her head, I saw on her face a look of despair and black revenge such as I had never seen before. After a moment she began to talk in a tragic, broken voice:

"The Governor will not give me back my son; this is impossible already. . . . I don't care for wealth and liberty. Blood demands blood. . . . Don't think badly of me, Sir, if you later hear something about me. . . . Once out of prison I was calm, I did nothing wrong. All that had gone before was past forever. In peace of spirit, in work and humility, I had hoped to end my martyr life. But it has been ordained otherwise . . . otherwise." . . .

She bowed low before me, accepted thankfully some money I gave her, and went away silent and apparently calm, but full of an ominous determination.

This same evening in a clandestine bar, one of my former drivers was poisoned with sublimate and the next day Karandashvili was nearly killed in the following manner. He was in the house of some friends where a

maydan (an evening at cards) had been arranged. When the play had continued long into the night, suddenly some one shot Karandashvili through the window, nearly killing him. A patrol arrested two suspected persons hidden nearby, the widow of the murdered Lisakoff and a small Greek merchant who had helped the despairing woman to secure the poison and the weapon to work her revenge.

Of course the punishment of the unhappy mother was severe and her fate ineffably tragic, for she probably never succeeded in passing a second time those walls which she had once left to begin the new life of freedom. Her fate I do not know, but I do know that the Russian laws as they were in Sakhalin were the cause of new and sometimes even more terrible crimes than those they sought to punish. The Lisakoff woman was the victim of these laws, for which now their creators and executors have paid with their blood, their fortunes, and their country to the Bolshevik avengers.

CHAPTER XXX

THE AVENGER OF ONOR

AFTER the tragic events in Pogibi, and after securing new helpers and food, I went eastward toward the coast, near which were the reported deposits of petroleum.

I first worked northeast, going through a forest country with some low mountain ranges. I visited two bays on the Okhotsk Sea, Nyisk and Nabil, into which the rivers Tim, Nutovo, and Poata-Syn flow. In marshy localities near these bays, I found some places where the petroleum, working up in the form of vapor through the geologic layers, had made little lakes which in time had partly evaporated and become basins full of a black sticky composition, the so-called *kir,* or thickened oxidized kerosene. Already at a depth of less than five hundred feet, shale with traces of oil is found. This rock oil, in its chemical composition and its physical properties, resembles the Caucasus oils, containing as high as thirty per cent of kerosene. These layers are contemporary with the coal deposits found on the island. Beginning from Nyisk Bay, subterranean basins of varying sizes extend far to the south, and even Fox Island in Patience Bay shows some signs of rock oil in the lower geologic strata.

Officially, the eastern shore of the island is not in-

habited. I found there some small native colonies, Pilngi and Unnu, and also some camps of Canadian and Japanese illicit traders. Being afraid of detection by the Government ships, which make occasional inspecting trips around the island, these intruders drag their boats up on the shore, cover them with hay, and camouflage the masts with branches to make them look like trees.

The foreigners barter with the natives for furs, gold, whalebone, and blubber, giving them in exchange tobacco, matches, needles, cotton goods, opium, alcohol, and playing cards, thus spreading among them drunkenness and gambling. The foreigners also take fresh-water pearls from the rivers Tim and Nutovo, shrimps, the biggest in the world, reaching sometimes twenty inches in length, and crabs, which they dry in the sun and grind to thick flour. In the north country, dough is made from this flour and something resembling bread is baked therefrom; it is very nutritious and withstands well all climatic changes.

Besides the indigenous Ainos, I also found here Golds, Orochons, and Manegrs from the Ussuri and the Amur, who cross the Tartar Passage in the winter and then traverse the whole island to camp along this eastern shore. Besides these Mongolian nomads, representatives of the animal world of the continent, elk, deer, and tiger, make this journey over the ice. These wild animals, avoiding the more settled sections along the western shore, also work over to the Okhotsk Sea on the east for their feeding grounds and sometimes for their permanent habitats.

The tigers are a plague to the Ainos, as they not only prey upon their cattle and pack-dogs, but often attack

the natives themselves, sometimes breaking up whole camps of these aborigines armed only with bows and spears. The Ainos allow the Golds and Orochons to camp and live in their territory without payment or conditions except that these bold hunters make war upon the terrible intruders from the continent. These nomad Orochons and Golds were the first to bring news of the petroleum on the island.

Well north of Pogibi, to which I returned after having visited the rock-oil localities, is Cape Maria, one of the most northern points of the island.

I had been informed that near this cape a hunter had found a marsh with definite traces of oil and *kir;* and, as I had two weeks before the arrival of the ship which was to take me home, I decided to visit this locality. I went on horseback with a guide whom I had to secure myself. I was irritated that the Russian authorities gave only evasive answers to all my urgent demands for a soldier. Forced to look for a private guide in Pogibi, I finally secured a fisherman, half-Mongolian and half-Russian, a type frequently met in Siberia. The island and neighboring seas were an open book to him and he had often gone as far north as St. Jonas Island and Cape Elizabeth in his quests for fish and seal. When I explained to him that I wanted to visit the neighborhoods of Cape Maria and Cape Elizabeth, he was quite pleased, asked for a very moderate wage, but stipulated that he should be allowed to take two pack-horses along.

I agreed and we started at dawn the next day along a rarely used forest road overgrown with grass and bushes.

Gustoff was a taciturn man. He went ahead leading

the horses tied one to the other and never looked at me, as I brought up the rear. Often I dismounted and hunted, for everywhere there were numerous flocks of white partridges and heath-cock. In one place I remained for twenty-four hours by a little lake where the water-fowl were very numerous counting among them several varieties of sea birds, easily explained by the nearness to the Passage and the abundance of fish in the lake, where they were constantly breaking in the open water and in the bulrushes. I saw here for the first time a migration of fish. A smaller lake lay but three hundred yards from the first and was practically only a puddle overgrown with grass and bulrushes. When I approached it, it resembled an artificial store of living fish, for its surface was never calm, being broken constantly by the swirls and circles of the swarms of finny creatures. While walking at dawn between the lake and this pond, I saw something moving in the high grass and shouted loudly to frighten the animal or bird, but nothing appeared. Then I carefully searched the grass and to my astonishment and amazement I discovered a big pike wriggling along through the tall dew-soaked grass in the direction of the pond whither he was evidently attracted by the quantity of food. That same evening after sundown I saw a second pike returning to the big lake, satiated to the point where it could not swallow the last fish whose tail still protruded from its mouth. I had read about this migration of fish on land and now saw for myself here in Sakhalin that this extraordinary phenomenon really existed.

Soon after leaving this lake, we met a man riding through the forest. He was just in the prime of life, of

square build and having a forbidding face, with a thick blond beard. As he approached, he set his horse straight across the road to block our way. My guide went ahead and began talking with him, indicating me with a glance. At this the stranger turned into the bushes to let our little caravan pass. As I came abreast of him, he rode up, greeted me very politely and began the talk.

"Our island must seem strange to you?"

I answered him, speaking openly and sincerely, and expressing my views about the island and its population.

"Oh, yes," he exclaimed, "in other than Russian hands, this island would surely become one of the richest colonies. There is everything here: coal, petroleum, iron, gold, fish, valuable furs, seals, and whales. A real paradise! And meanwhile only convicts are yarded and fed here, the authorities thus leaving the natural wealth of the island undeveloped, infecting with the breath and corpses of these monsters the very earth and the air of Sakhalin."

"You are not very well disposed toward the inhabitants of the prisons!" I exclaimed in astonishment, as I felt sure that I had before me one of the released prisoner colonists.

"One has to know them, as I know them . . . know the depth of their black, vile souls," he answered, at the same time clenching his fists. "The Government is stupid to let them live, these men-beasts! The West is wiser in sending them to the electric chair and thus ridding society of their infectious and dangerous presence."

"Don't you believe in the possibility of improvement for the Sakhalin prisoners?" I asked.

"No!" he answered in a harsh voice. "How could men

be reformed who before arriving here had already been in prison several times for increasingly heinous crimes? They are only men outwardly, creatures without souls, without the divine spark. I have seen it in the children and the grandchildren of these beasts, begotten by parents without souls and consequently without souls themselves; as a result of which they became criminals at the first temptation and often surpassed their parents in degradation."

Hearing him speak thus with such profound conviction and great excitement, I was lost in speculation to his identity. Unusually well-read and observant, he had reflected a great deal upon the importance of Sakhalin and the character of those who made up its terrible and tragic population. However, I could make nothing of it and consequently I asked him outright.

"I see that you have only recently come here!" he laughed, "because otherwise you would have heard about me. I am Andrew Bolotoff."

Inasmuch as the name meant nothing to me, I continued with questions as to how long he had been in Sakhalin and whence and why he had come. He replied that he had been there about seven years, having come from the Tomsk district. Then he thought a moment and later continued:

"I came here on a religious mission as I felt that these people needed something to allay the reproaches of their consciences, to deaden the echoes of their faults. I sold religious books, Bibles, ikons and crosses, and collected money to build churches."

"And did you succeed?"

He was silent and his face darkened.

"Very well!" he laughed sneeringly. "Do you see my white hairs? They are the proof of the success of my Christian mission."

"I do not understand."

"Yes," he exploded, "it is difficult to understand, very difficult!"

He offered me tobacco for my pipe and, following it with a match, he continued:

"If you will allow me, I will ride along with you for a while."

"Please do," I answered.

Bolotoff rode beside me, smoking his pipe. When he had finished it, he shook the ashes out, put the pipe in the leg of his boot and went on with his narrative:

"A great misfortune overtook me on this accursed soil, so great that it is impossible to phrase it. When I speak of it, my soul weeps bloody tears! In my country I had a beloved wife who died, leaving me a son ten years old, a bright boy, quiet and good. I swore to my dying wife that I would protect him from evil and make a man of him. I realized that God took my wife from me as a punishment for my sins, and I decided to atone for these sins by pious deeds, so I began to devote myself to religious thoughts, selling ikons and books to raise money for the building of churches. I wandered through all Siberia with my son, who in the hopelessly dark and dreary villages read beautifully from the Bible and spoke with the conviction of childlike simplicity about God the Creator and Christ the Saviour of the World. Finally, I decided to end my wanderings and to settle down where my boy could study. I thought to crown my religious

activities, which had been so respected and encouraged by Bishops Nicholas, Silvester, and Makari, with a visit to this island of Sakhalin to do something for the poor convicts, forever deprived of liberty and human rights. As usual I brought my son with me. We found here men who seemed to listen with concentration and sincerity to the words of Holy Writ so harmoniously read by my boy full of Christian zeal. What a lot of convict children he taught to read and write!

"After a time I wanted to send back all the money I had collected to Siberia to Bishop Makari. We were in Onor and I was taken sick so that I had to send my son with the money to the post-office in Dué. He went, but never returned. I searched for him a whole month and finally found him in the forest with his head crushed by an axe. They had taken even his clothes and boots together with the money collected with such effort for the house of God. For a long time I searched for the murderers and eventually found them. They were men who had often listened to the words of Holy Writ read by my son, the very same men."

He broke off, breathing hard and showing hatred in every lineament of his face.

"Now I understand why you think so badly of the inhabitants of the island," I remarked, looking with compassion at the unfortunate father. "But why did you remain here?"

"Do you suppose that I, who had given my word to my dying wife that I would take care of our son and who had not fulfilled this promise, could live calmly after such a deed?"

He said this with terrible though restrained feeling. I could say nothing and was silent until he began again to speak feverishly:

"I discovered the murderers. They were Koshka, Sokol, Selivanoff, Dormidontoff, and Grenitch. When they learned that I was on their trail, they fled from Onor in the direction of Pogibi. They were pursued by the authorities but without success. I myself eventually overtook them all and killed each one with an axe. Then the prison scum of released convicts sentenced me to death and let it be known to me. I answered that I would kill every one of them whom I should meet, and the Lord is my witness that I was true to my word! Then the ex-convicts and fugitives from the Onor prison began to hunt me. Several times I was in their hands, I have two knife wounds in my back and broken ribs, but I made them pay with death for my wounds. No, no one from the Onor prison will escape me! The authorities know that I do not follow other prisoners, but if anyone escapes from Onor, they send me word and my avenging hand always overtakes him. Not one of them will escape me, no, not one!"

Such an avenger was Andrew Bolotoff. Afterwards in Dué, the chief of the battalion of punishment, Colonel Jouravski, told me that Bolotoff roamed in all parts of the island, living by hunting, and it was only necessary to let it be known that a prisoner from Onor had escaped to have him turn up immediately to gather all the information he could about the prisoner and disappear as abruptly. In such cases the authorities did not even bother to send pursuers after the fugitive, knowing that the "Avenger" would run him down. The state premium

received for each capture he gave in full for the building of churches and for prayers for the soul of his lost son.

When Bolotoff had ended his narrative, I could not for a long time shake off the terrible, stifling impression it left on me. I appreciated that revenge is a bad counselor, but could not fail to feel the whole depth of despair and hate in this man. Taking leave of him, I gave him my hand and said:

"May God grant appeasement to your heart!"

Bolotoff crossed himself devoutly and whispered:

"I also ask only for this, but surely it can never, never come."

Strange to say, once more after many years I met the Avenger. It was in January, 1920, when I was forcing my way back from Tomsk to Krasnoyarsk to escape from the Bolsheviks. I had to pass through the village of Bogotol, near which a famous Partisan had his headquarters and from there robbed and killed not only ordinary citizens, but Bolshevik Commissars, officials, and soldiers as well. Everybody avoided the locality and traveled the big highway to the north rather than follow the railroad. As I felt morally certain of perishing anyway, I followed the almost deserted road to the left of the railway line, which was jammed with an uninterrupted chain of trains abandoned by the armies and State institutions of Admiral Kolchak and only moved away by the Bolsheviks some three months later. At one of the little stations west of Bogotol I stopped to rest and eat, as I was tired, cold, and hungry. I found there only a small official and some workers, except for a single individual sitting in the corner, who jumped up suddenly as I entered but immediately sat down again

hiding his face in a big fur collar. I remarked only a long white beard and hair bushing out from under his large sheepskin *papakha.*

When I asked the official and the workers to sell me something to eat, they refused brusquely and would not even talk with me. As I was traveling in a light sleigh drawn by two weary horses, I went out of the station to inspect my animals and decide whether they would be able to carry on some twelve miles farther to the next station where perhaps I might find a better reception. Alas, the horses were quite spent and stood there with sadly lowered heads, shivering with fatigue.

The door of the station building creaked and I looked around to see a broad-shouldered, white-haired peasant clad in a fur cap and a short sheepskin coat with a big collar, standing in the entrance observing me carefully. Finally, he rubbed his brow with his hand and asked:

"Well, you have nothing to eat?"

"Nothing," I answered. "And I don't know what to do as these horses cannot possibly take me to the next station. Perhaps you could tell me where I could buy some bread and some oats or hay for the horses?"

He laughed low and answered:

"It will be difficult, for everything here has been stolen first by Kolchak's soldiers and then by the Bolsheviks; but if you are in such a need, I shall treat you."

Saying this, he clapped his hands and from the forest, which was separated from the station only by the railroad, appeared a horseman. Calling him over the line, the old man whispered something to him, then invited me into the station. After a few moments the rider returned and brought a bag from which he took a bottle

of vodka, a glass, bread, eggs, and a bit of bacon, and placed it on the table.

"Eat!" said the old man, turning to me. "And you, Alexei, unharness the horses and feed them. This traveler is an acquaintance of mine. Do you hear?"

I indulged in no ceremonies and ate as a healthy man can eat who has a clean conscience, fears nothing and awaits nothing.

"And you are not afraid to traverse this locality?" asked the old man, smiling and shrugging his shoulders.

"Before whom and of what am I to be afraid? I have no money, and have wronged no one; and if I am to perish, well and good, because I have enough of this life! Think, only! I have worked all my life like an ox; I received nothing as an inheritance, I have robbed no one, I owe everything to my hands and my head; and the Bolsheviks tell me that I am an exploiter of the people, a bourgeois, and a vampire who has sucked the blood of the workers! Such a stupid state of affairs disgusts me and I should like to make an end of it."

The old man laughed loudly and exclaimed:

"Yes, the Bolsheviks are stupid and they are bound to commit such stupidities as will destroy them. But you could easily be in danger here, as the Partisan Bolotoff ranges the country near Bogotol. You have surely heard that he slaughtered everybody in the town of Kusnetsk?"

The news of the terrible slaughter wrought by a Red Partisan in Kusnetsk had echoed through all Siberia, and the name of Bolotoff struck awe in the hearts of everyone; for in Kusnetsk the heads of Engineers Pervoff and Sadoff and others were put on poles and exposed in the square, women tortured in the most horrible way, all the

intelligentsia killed and all schools, hospitals, and churches burned.

"I have heard of it," I answered, "but I have no choice. I journey along this road and perhaps this is the end of it all. Shall I arrive? I don't know. But why trouble my head about it? I shall learn it soon enough."

My unknown host laughed again, visibly amused by my lightmindedness in matters of life and death; but he became serious again and, bending toward me, asked:

"Have you ever been in Sakhalin?"

"Yes, I visited the whole island. But it was a long time ago."

The old man stood up and stretched out his hand to me:

"Do you remember Bolotoff, Andrew Bolotoff, the Avenger, whom you met on the road from Pogibi to Cape Maria?" . . .

He stopped short and then later added:

". . . The one who told you about his boy that was killed near Onor? Do you remember?"

"Is it possible that you are he?" I almost gasped. "You have changed tremendously."

"Well, much time has flown and water flowed since then," he said thoughtfully. "Now everything has changed and I have changed also. I was once collecting money for churches and now I have taken a rifle and I shed human blood like water."

"Then you really are this Bolotoff, the Partisan from . . . Kusnetsk!"

"Yes," he gaily replied as he shook his white locks. "I am enjoying myself immensely and have everywhere the freedom of the road."

"How can it be?" I asked with astonishment, forgetting what a terrible celebrity I had before me. "On Sakhalin you persecuted the Onor convicts and now you have turned upon the officials of the Government which was not exactly lenient to them!"

"It is a simple matter," he answered. "After the first Revolution the Government amnestied the Sakhalin convicts and the first to go away were the prisoners from Onor. I pursued them everywhere. Then the officials arrested me and sentenced me to five years' imprisonment. I escaped, arrived in Kusnetsk, which was my native town, and formed a band to persecute the officials of the Government which had shown pity for my enemies. I read them a good lesson, and afterwards, the Bolsheviks killed all these officials. I thought that really just and upright men were in power and threw in my lot with them; but I soon saw that these who had been prisoners in Onor were now commissars, and so I turned again and began to fight the Bolsheviks. This is my whole story! I cannot do otherwise, as I shall have no peace so long as a single one of the former convicts of Onor still lives. I shall have no peace." And he banged the table with his fist.

Owing to my fortuitous meeting with Bolotoff, I quietly crossed the zone of his influence and was certainly the only unprotected traveler who passed through this locality without harm.

And thus unexpectedly this encounter with the Avenger in the Sakhalin *taiga* on the road between Pogibi and the shores of the Okhotsk Sea, saved me. Strange contacts are made in life and their results are often mysterious.

CHAPTER XXXI

A DUEL WITH A BEAR

AFTER my ride with Bolotoff, I reached Cape Maria without any further unusual adventures. The whole northern part of the island I passed through was entirely uninhabited as the two small villages, Motnar and Pil-wo on the west coast, were off my route.

Everywhere in the forest I met bears, not very big and almost black, called "ant-bears," as they eat ants and their larvae which they dig from ant-hills. This food so stimulates the bears that they do not hibernate or even make hibernating nests for themselves. The Siberian hunters are of the opinion that the ant-bears are not a special species of bear, but that they are only psychically diseased specimens which have been checked in their development and have taken on a more somber hue. In any case, they are much more vicious than the common brown bear.

The Orochons and Golds, well trained in bear hunting, regard the ant-bear as an evil spirit whom they must sometimes propitiate to make a powerful ally of him. Owing to this, they shoot it only when forced by circumstances—that is, when they are hunting the common bear single-handed. I have never seen Orochons hunting the master of the forest, but have had the unusual good for-

tune to be present at a religious ceremony during which a duel took place between a man and a bear.

It was in one of the camps of the Orochons near Nikolaievsk on the Amur. A large bear weighing about six hundred pounds had been caught, bound with leather thongs, and dragged to a forest meadow where it was placed in the middle of a small enclosure made of short heavy posts securely fastened together. Then a *shaman* cast lots to see who should fight the bear. Fate thus selected a boy about sixteen years old who, evidently pleased and proud of his chance, put a knife in his belt, straightened his leather blouse, and stepped into the enclosure. First he cut the thongs that bound the animal, then sprang to the farther end of the enclosure and stood there with his knife ready. The bear looked around with its small bloodshot eyes, scrambled up on his hind legs and went at the boy. The boy did not wait for the attack, but bending his head rushed the animal and, sheltering his face with his left arm, jammed his right shoulder up into the socket or armpit under the bear's extended right paw, thus putting this one out of action and leaving only the left to strike him in the back, if at all, because of the speed of the thrust with the knife. This stroke was a quick upward slash which brought the bear to the ground before he had been able to bring his terrible paws into play. The boy was not hurt in the least and the bear was finished. These natives hunt the bear in the *taiga* in this manner, and I learned from them after this religious contest that the secret of the attack is to jam the left forearm up into what corresponds to the armpit of the bear—that is, just where the foreleg joins the body, so as to hamper the bear in bringing his front paws into action. But they

added that no one would have the courage to attack the ant-bear in this way. If it begins molesting them, the Orochons kill it with a rifle and eat its heart, which is their method of squaring accounts with the ant-bear that is not sufficiently considerate of its human neighbors.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE BLACK MONK

FINALLY, on our northward trek we saw the sea and the sands of Cape Maria. Clouds of birds soared above the shore, filling the air with their shrieks and cries. As we emerged from the forest I saw on the shore above the sands a high cross of roughly hewn birch logs. I rode up to it and read the following inscription in Russian, so little in keeping with the general spirit of the country.

"Glory to God in the Highest, and Peace to Men on Earth, and on the Sea of Life!"

The presence of this Christian symbol in this wilderness astonished me, and I asked my guide who had erected the cross here.

He answered me with an evident show of emotion:

"The Black Monk!"

I asked the question just as we were climbing a rather steep, sandy slope, where the going was so bad that the horses had difficulty and we were obliged to dismount and to shift the luggage to help the pack animals. This prevented me for the time being from getting any information about the Black Monk. When we had finally crossed these shifting sands, wrinkled in long waves by the action of the wind, I saw ahead of us an old, one-storied house built of blackened larch logs. On the north end it had a sort of small tower carrying a gilded cross.

"This is where the Black Monk lives," the guide explained. "I don't know whether we shall find him home as he is generally on the sea these days."

We approached the house, but nobody came to meet us; and only when we began shouting, some Ainos appeared and with difficulty explained that the monk was out at sea, that they had come a long distance to seek his advice and were awaiting his return.

We spent two days here, installing ourselves in the monk's house after the guide had assured me that the good man would be very pleased to find we had done so. At dawn the following morning we were wakened by the barking of the Ainos' dogs. I went out of the house just in time to see a big sailboat being beached. As the sails were furled, I saw three men who, having properly moored the boat, started for the house. I hurried forward to meet them.

The foremost was a monk tall of stature, white as a pigeon, and so thin that he gave me the impression there was only a skeleton under his black habit. On seeing me he smoothed his long white beard and moustache and with a quick movement drew over his head the black cowl of his cassock. As the cowl dropped over the forehead, I saw a white cross on the edge of the black cloth. A heavy, iron one hung from a chain on his breast. He wore high boots of sealskin shod with iron. A stout rope girt his cassock, while on his left wrist he had a rosary of large bone beads. The cowl almost hid his face, yet I remarked his unusually bright and questioning look, his white bushy brows, his thin eagle-like nose and finely lined mouth showing an iron strength of will.

As we came nearer to each other I was struck by the

sound of clinking chains, so well known in this region of prisons.

"Is it possible that he is also a convict?" flashed through my mind.

But at this moment the Black Monk raised his thin hand and made in my direction the sign of the Cross, saying in aged tones:

"May the Lord bless your arrival to our wilderness, my son."

I introduced myself and together we entered the house. My guide and the Ainos met the monk at the entrance, kneeling and bowing before him to the earth. When he put his hands on their heads and blessed them, they raised up and lovingly kissed the hands of the old man. He went to his room and returned shortly robed in a lighter cassock with the cowl thrown back, showing his long snowy hair.

I spent the day and another night in his unique abode. He asked me about the political life in Russia and other countries, about scientific and religious movements, about some Russians prominent in Government and scientific circles, and finally, quite unexpectedly, he broke into excellent French to explain to me that he would transact some business with my guide, who had brought him food supplies, and would interview the Ainos who had come in search of medical help. Then we should be able to have a longer talk without interruption.

However, leisure came to him only after supper, a meal composed of fresh fish, as the monk had eaten no meat for fifty years and never had it on his table. He ate very little and this against his will as though forced to do it by necessity. He drank a small glass of tea without sugar,

said a short grace, and took a more comfortable seat on a bench covered with a spotted seal skin.

For a long time I had to give him news of Petrograd and Moscow. Then having learned that I had spent some years in Paris, he asked about such scholars as Lichtenberger, Réclus, Roux, Boussinesque, Flammarion, and Poincaré. He was much interested in Leo Tolstoi, Vladimir Solovieff, and the writer Korolenko, all of whom he had known personally, as he had traveled much in Europe.

He was deeply read in all literatures, showing a wide knowledge and fine critical sense; but from what he said I perceived that his contact and relations with contemporary life had ended about thirty years before. This man had so much gravity, wisdom, and unruffled calm, so deep a comprehension of life, and such majesty of thought that I did not feel like interrogating him and simply waited for him to begin himself to talk about his younger years. My hope was not in vain.

He noticed that I had several times listened with astonishment to the sound of chains, which was audible whenever he made the slightest movement; and, raising to my face his bright blue eyes, he said in a low voice:

"I have the *verigi* on me, chains which cross the back and end at the waist with a heavy lock, and I wear a horsehair shirt. I do it to mortify my body. I accepted this light punishment of my free will as I am a great criminal."

I did not protest, but merely looked straight into his eyes.

"I am a criminal, do you hear it?" he asked with impatience.

"Yes, I heard," I answered.

"Well, and what do you say to that?"

Some curiosity and impatience were perceptible in his voice. I shrugged my shoulders and answered calmly, looking into the blue eyes of the monk.

"We are all at times the greatest criminals and each of us can be, if he wishes it, a confessor and the most severe judge for himself, Father."

The old man closed his eyes for a moment and, after a short silence, asked again, looking at me curiously:

"And what more?"

"What more? Terrible things can occur if man has in himself the strength to see his secret crimes. He can go mad, or do a terrible penance, or change completely."

"You are young, my son, but you speak as though you knew life."

"Father," I answered, "for a long time the problems of life, hard, sly, and filled with insidious temptation, have surrounded me. I know life well and know what it is worth. I know that the strongest temptation lies in the unfulfilled wish, which can make of a man a martyr with a radiant but weak soul, full of tears, or a criminal with a black soul, full of blood and hate. Only the strongest can withstand it and their lives, even though hard and sad, can be models for others and their work can yield a rich harvest."

The monk bent his white head and thought profoundly. The silence was long and I already knew that I would hear the confession of a human soul full of pain and trouble. The old man got up, poured tea for both of us, took his place on the bench again and began to speak, in-

terrupting his narrative from time to time with spells of deep thought.

"It is true that only moral torture can destroy or build a man. It was so with me. What was my crime? That makes no difference. It makes no difference whether it was a murder of body or soul; crime is crime and begets moral torture, remembrance, reproach, and despair. I have passed in life all the stations on this way of torture: I had a clean soul, I had a black one, finally I had none, as I felt no longing and no happiness. At last, everything changed to something else, something that called me to the life of others. I looked for this road, but could not, alas, find it in cultural centers. My social environment presented insurmountable difficulties to my new tastes. So I entered a monastery, the most austere in all Russia, and quickly attained to the highest rank among the monks because of my piety and humility; but I realized that the monastery could not give me peace. Then I put on my horsehair shirt and the *verigi* and journeyed from place to place seeking a territory where I could work for my brethren. I came to Sakhalin, saw this abyss of indescribable torture, this hell where the bodies and souls of living men are burning and understood that on this background I should be able to make such a picture as I had dreamed. I began to strive toward this end, but the viewpoint of the authorities made my work impossible. I left the prisons and the colonies of the transported and moved here to the north, where I spread Christianity among the natives and where for a long time I have fought with the infections of drunkenness, degradation, and gambling brought here by Russians and foreigners. I doctored the body and the soul."

He sighed profoundly and added in a low voice:

"I speak as though I wanted to praise myself, but this is not the case. I speak as in confession, as I have already reached the end of my life. I feel it distinctly. I shall tell you more: I think that I have returned from my last journey on the sea which for such a long time has known me among its waves."

I tried to protest, but seeing that it made no impression on him, I asked:

"What sort of journeys on the sea have you made, Father?"

He answered at once with an animation that told me that the subject was near his heart.

"Living on this shore at the end of the Tartar Passage, I often saw the boats of fishermen and fugitives from Sakhalin swept out by the winds and waves into the open sea where sure death awaited them. It is a Christian duty to save the drowning and I have even been told that the signal of the sinking ships calling for help in the mysterious voice of wireless telegraphy is the three letters 'S. O. S.' and that these mean 'Save our Souls.' Here in my own field I began to help these drowning souls. With the aid of two of my old friends, Christian Ainos, I constructed a strong boat in which during storms, we sail up and down the sea to help the perishing. At night I burn a lantern on this sandy cape where I keep my boat."

As he said this, he laughed low and pointed out to me through the window a high mast with a lantern at the peak.

"We burn codliver oil in the lantern and during heavy storms we build fires and put *kir* into them to prevent the

wind and rain from extinguishing them. My Ainós are very skilful and bold sailors; I shall show them to you."

With these words he clapped his hands and two old Ainos entered, dressed in leather coats, trousers, and boots reaching almost to their waists. They had horrible faces, without noses, lips, and eye-lids, showing big, yellow teeth and looking like skulls. I had no doubt as to the disease which had disfigured the faces of these quiet, faithful men.

"Leprosy?" I asked.

"Yes," answered the monk. "But it develops very slowly, as these people have already had it thirty years. I am sure that it is not infectious, as I have been living with these men for so long. My friends who have visited me each year have also been about with them and none of us has caught the disease, in spite of the fact that we have been so closely associated with them."

"You must have saved a great many, Father."

"During these forty years many rescues have been made, for we do not wait until the waves bring some one here to us but we ourselves sail to the south and cruise the northern part of the Passage, to help the drowning. We are well known all through these waters. A poet named Kuriloff once came to visit us and described me as the 'Flying Monk.' When I succour the fugitive convicts, the authorities make no protest or trouble for me—why, I don't know. I am sure that each rescued fugitive will sooner or later perish or will be back again in prison. I know that it would be better for him to drown, but I feel that, if he is rebelling and escaping, it signifies that he has not yet lived through all the trials which might bring him resignation; and helping him, I want to give him the

chance to endure all the spiritual tortures which might save his soul from the black darkness that has mastered it. I save these drowning ones, not for happiness and joy, but for new torments and longings."

"Do the fugitives who wish to cross the straits know of your existence?"

"Oh, yes, I am known in every *katorga* and, as the convicts are very superstitious, when they are starting on this perilous journey they make from soft bread and coal dust small figures of black monks and carry them as talismans to bring my boat to them in case the sea threatens them," and the old man laughed softly.

It was well on toward morning, so that the sky had paled before the dawn when we ended our talk. The Black Monk with his clinking chains got up from the bench and bade me good night with a brief blessing. He went into the second room, which was his cell, and for a long time afterward I heard the noise of his chains and the soft tones of his voice as the monk prayed fervently till dawn.

It was barely six o'clock when I got up and went outside, where the Father was already talking with my guide and giving him advice and directions.

"You arise early," I observed; "you do not sleep much."

"An old body does not need much sleep," he answered gaily, "especially as it will soon rest forever."

Some hours later I said good-bye to the Black Monk down near the cross to which he accompanied me. He stood there for a long time like a tall black statue with his hand raised in blessing; and again, as I looked back, I felt the calm majesty of this mysterious soul, which because of a crime known only to itself, had passed through

the fiery tortures of conscience and remembrance and had finally gained eternal peace, rounding out a magnificent whole, clear as a crystal, hard as steel, and sensitive as the surface of the borderless sea.

The ship *Aleut* was awaiting me in Dué. The captain explained that he had to make up through the Tartar Passage to Cape Maria, as he had orders to deliver letters from one of the Grand Dukes to the Black Monk, and suggested that I await the return of the *Aleut* in Dué. But I much preferred to journey with him to have the pleasure of seeing the Black Monk again.

After two days' steaming we dropped anchor late at night about a mile and a half off the cape.

"It's strange!" said the captain. "It is rather stormy tonight and the monk's lantern is not lighted as it always is in rough weather. Perhaps he is at sea; yet we did not meet him in the Passage. I wonder what it can mean?"

That night we could not lower the boats, but the next morning very early we were at the house of the monk. Nobody met us as we entered. Everything looked as usual there. We called and rapped on the door of the cell. When no one answered we opened the door and —stopped in silence.

The old monk lay in a bent posture before a high desk covered with black velvet embroidered with a silver cross and with a Bible upon it. Evidently, death had overtaken him just as he knelt and touched his head to the earth in prayer. The cowl was pushed low on his face, and the bony fingers, already cold, tightly clasped the beads of his rosary.

We looked about the room and saw that nothing had

been taken, not a piece of furniture was out of place. The only noteworthy thing in the room was a small white sealed envelope on a table near the window. On it I read:

"To be buried with me."

Through the thin paper of the envelope, the picture of a woman in rich wedding dress with a long veil over her black hair was visible. On the back of the picture were indecipherable words written in a small refined hand.

Near-by was a bit of paper with the words:

"I go away appeased and calm. The drowning in the sea of life can be saved. I bless them in God's name!"

We buried the Black Monk under the cross he had erected and sailed away.

Leaving at last this country of torture and longing, this accursed island above which floats the infamous music of chains, I carried away with me the remembrance of three martyrs, so unlike one to the other.

I see the tragic face, the immobile, frightened and watchful eyes of the wife and mother whom I saw for the last time in depressing Pogibi; I remember the hate-laden words of Andrew Bolotoff, who persecuted the murderers of his son; and I have with me always the majestic spiritual face of the mysterious Black Monk, finally at peace with life.

And above them all, as the supreme symbol of human suffering in the struggle of life, I see the simple cross standing out on Cape Maria and the still simpler inscription on it:

"Glory to God in the Highest and Peace to Men on Earth and on the Sea of Life."

Part IV

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT ALTAI

Part IV

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT ALTAI

CHAPTER XXXIII

CRUISING AN ANCIENT SEA

MAN never knows what will befall him.

I was seated one day in my room in Petrograd reading the letter of a friend asking me to come and visit him at his estate and to spend the summer there. I was tired after a hard winter of research work in a chemical laboratory and was about to write thanking him and accepting his invitation when my 'phone rang impatiently.

"Allo!" I heard the well-known voice of my old teacher, Professor Stanislaw Zaleski, saying. "I count on you to go exploring with me tomorrow. Well?"

"But where are you going?"

"To the Great Altai, my dear," he answered calmly. "We shall visit the little known Kulunda steppes with their interesting salt lakes and the Altai Mountains, more beautiful than the Alps."

"But . . ."

Without paying any attention to my "but" the learned man continued:

"For you as a hunter and a writer it will be a paradise."

"What kind of hunting is there?" I asked.

"Bear, deer, heath-cock, and in the mountains it is reported that there is a sort of bison, immense mountain bulls something like the ure-ox."

"Well, I will go," I said into that inanimate mouthpiece.

"Tomorrow at three o'clock the Siberian express is starting. . . ."

I sat down at my desk and wrote my friend that I could not come as I was going to Siberia to visit the Altai, of which I had dreamed so many years.

The next day the Siberian express carried us away from the smoking chimneys of the Petrograd factories and the noise of the broad and magnificent streets of the Russian capital out toward the Ural Mountains and the freedom of the plains.

On the sixth day of our journey we arrived at the scientific cultural center of Siberia, the city of Tomsk, located on the river Tom, an affluent of the great Asiatic river Ob, which has its sources in the Altai Mountains and empties into the Arctic Ocean.

Here we received from the authorities the necessary credentials and from the University library scientific literature dealing with the country we were to visit. The director of the University, Dr. W. W. Sapoznikoff, gave us priceless information about the Altai.

After a stay of some days in Tomsk, we continued our journey in a little steamer which took us down the Tom

to the Ob, where we began a tedious fight against the swift current and sand-bars of this powerful river, and the masses of floating logs which the freshets had filched from the mountains. We made slow progress, stopping often to take wood fuel for the engines; we ran easily upon sand-bars and left them with great difficulty. A sailor in the prow was constantly sounding with a measuring pole and would sing out his:

"Have a care! Three feet. . . . Two feet six. . . . Two. . . . We're aground!"

With engines reversed we would pull back off the bar and try another part of the stream.

The landscape but added to the tediousness of the journey as we sailed between low islands covered with willows or near monotonous shores, overgrown with thickets or with the aftergrowth that follows the birch clearings. Our only pleasure was food, and what appetites we had on this craft that struggled with the current of the yellow Ob like a clumsy tortoise! Fortunately, the food was unusual, as the fishermen along the shores furnished the cook with fresh sterlets, *nelm*, and *maksuns*, the latter two varieties of the salmon family which were so tasty that at times we could forget our tortoise-ship.

Finally, we reached Novo-Nikolaievsk, then only a small town but now the capital of Soviet Siberia. It is situated on the right bank of the Ob near the eastern end of the immense bridge which spans the river. This town, united by the river with the fertile regions to the south and by the railroad put in touch with all the markets of the world, grew by leaps and bounds.

We spent a day in this center of Siberian commerce, and then swung into the stream, condemned to crawl

endlessly in our struggle with sand-bars and floating timber and to eat sterlets.

Our steamer was to take us to the town of Barnaul, capital of the mining district of Altai. From there we were to go by wagon to the Kulunda steppes. These banks of the Ob below Barnaul are not so picturesque as those I saw and admired on the beautiful and powerful Yenesei, that dreamland of a painter. For this reason our journey continued to be uniform and tedious, broken only for us at a place about fifty miles north of the town, where, near the outskirts of an unknown village, we witnessed a very unique forest drama. In a little meadow near the shore, a horse was grazing tied to a birch. Suddenly, the animal flung up its head and threw all its weight into an attempt to break the rope. As it did not succeed, it began circling the meadow and neighing with terror.

I thought at first that our painfully wheezing steamer had frightened the horse, but soon I discovered the real and more dangerous cause. A big brown bear came swaying from side to side out of the forest, made at the horse, caught it with one paw by the neck, and with the other tried to get hold of a tree. At first the horse dragged it along, but finally the bear succeeded in getting a purchase on a trunk. In a moment the horse was down and the brown aggressor, with one powerful stroke of its paw, broke its back. I shot several times, but only to see the bear make off and hide in the forest.

Next morning the whistle of our steamer announced our arrival at Barnaul.

As soon as possible we completed our formalities in the Mining Bureau and in the Administration of the Imperial

Crown Lands, as part of our studies were to be made therein, and the next day we started west in two wagons, each drawn by three fine prairie horses.

At first our road wound among very picturesque low hills, the last outlying reaches of the Altai Mountains. We passed continuously through birch forests thickly dotted with small Russian villages.

As we had as outrider a police official from Barnaul always in advance to order the change of horses and as the roads were magnificent, we made fast speed, covering ten to twelve miles an hour.

It was a strange ride. Strong but quite untrained horses were taken from the studs and harnessed to our wagons, called in Tartar *tarantas.* During the harnessing, peasants had to hang on tight to the jumping horses. The coachman, called here *yamstchik,* took his place on the box, gathered the reins in his hands and, with his long rawhide whip or *knoot,* lashed the horses with all his strength just as he cried to the peasants to let go. The men jumped to the side and the carriage, as though snatched by wind, sped along to the next village. If a weaker horse began to tire, the coachman bent down without stopping and cut the rope traces, letting the horse loose to rest and return to its stud.

Our policeman, aside from the help that he gave us in preparing fresh horses, proved a source of trouble for the Professor. The peasants took us for high officials and, as they could not imagine anyone more exalted than a governor, they looked upon him as such and besieged him with petitions and all sorts of business matters. In one village a young peasant woman accused her husband of beating her when he was drunk; in another a couple

asked for a divorce; while in a third, a peasant deposed that his late father had been poisoned by unlawful heirs. It was difficult to convince them as to our calling, plans, and intentions.

Soon the forests disappeared and the grass-covered prairies began. Sheep and cattle grazed everywhere on the immense expanse of the Kulunda steppes. The mounted herdsmen proved to be Talaout-Kirghizi, to whom the prairie pastures belonged. However, the Government settled in these prairies emigrants from European Russia and took from the real Kirghiz owners a part of these pastures. This was the cause of violent quarrels and hatred between the natives and the emigrants, and even of armed struggles. The Kirghizi, weapons in hand, defended their pastures and herds, and as always happened in Russia with its aggressive psychology, in these prairies blood was often spilt; then followed the inquests and processes which filled the prisons and mines with condemned Kirghizi. Praying in prison to their Prophet, the Kirghizi tried in vain to understand why they had been put in prison, and they naturally lived with nothing but the thoughts of revenge on the aggressors, police, and judges.

The Kirghizi, with whom we lived on very friendly terms after we had sent back our policeman to Barnaul, recounted to us innumerable stern experiences which this peace-loving and cultural Mongolian tribe had had to undergo, stories of despair and often of burning hate.

The Kulunda prairie is covered with a network of small lakes, mostly salt, the largest of which is Lake Kulunda with Lake Kutchuk to the south of it separated by a narrow neck of marshy land. They are reservoirs of salt

water, the first forty miles in length, and the second only fifteen. West from this group is a long chain of salt lakes reaching the river Irtysh, beyond which lie many more small bodies in the lands of the Great and Little Kirghiz tribes. Southward the lakes of the Kulunda prairies extend to the Belyaga steppe, beyond which lie the immense reservoirs of Zaisang and Balkash or Ak-Dengiz as the southernmost sentinels of the system.

After a two days' journey we finally reached Kulunda Lake and stopped in the Russian village situated on the southeast shore. We remained here only long enough to purchase a Kirghiz *yurta*, sheep and bread, and to lease horses and a boat for our trip in the steppes and our work on the lake.

In this village we borrowed a policeman whose presence again obliged us to spend much time in matters quite outside the sphere of our regular activities. We passed two days in the company of this representative of what was to the Kirghizi and peasants, the highest and most terrible authority. After his departure, the life of restrictions imposed by him returned to its usual and more cheerful course. First there began a drunken revel in celebration of the fact that, owing to our presence, he had gone away without arresting anybody and without whipping or exacting bribes. But the result of the revels was a series of street brawls among the peasants, in which they not only hammered one another furiously with their strong fists but even with cudgels and stones, so that on the evening of the departure of this officer of the law we were obliged to dress smashed skulls and broken jaws.

But the worst adventure occurred in the night.

Some drunken young peasants made a raid on the

Kirghiz herds grazing about six miles away, killed the herdsmen, and ran off many sheep. A new drinking bout began in honor of the raiders.

We could not sleep at all. The peasants roamed through the whole village, crying and singing in drunken voices, playing on accordions and dancing, breaking windows and cursing with foul oaths known only to the Russian language. Finally, all quieted down with part of the drunken peasants left snoring in the gutters and we hoped for some respite and sleep. Alas, the night was filled with incessant action and terror.

Hardly had we lain down, when we heard a terrible shriek in the street.

"Fire! Fire!"

We rushed out of the house and saw that houses were already burning at both ends of the village and that the flames were spreading to others. We organized a fire-fighting squad, but it was no easy task with the peasants half numb with vodka. The Professor looked on the swaying peasants and observed:

"Such an individual, soaked in alcohol, can take fire just like an overturned alcohol lamp."

When we had checked the flames after they had devoured only two of the houses, we returned to our quarters thoroughly tired and ready to rest, when a new uproar burst in upon us.

"Another adventure!" exclaimed the Professor. "Well, this is a gay place; we shall not tire of it!"

We went out and found a crowd of peasants surrounding a man and threatening him with fists and sticks. It was the incendiary. The whole matter had its special

ethnographic color. The peasants raided the Kirghiz herds and the Kirghizi sought to burn their village.

The incendiary had been found hiding in the grass near the village, and now he was to be lynched. He was really already half dead, as the mob had beaten him so furiously that his head and face were not like those of a human being. His arm had been broken in the struggle with the peasants and one of his feet was *hors de combat.*

We took the side of the Kirghiz, declaring that he must be put in jail till the advent of the proper authorities to pass judgment upon him. The mayor of the village, holding the same opinion, drove back the peasants and personally placed the Kirghiz in his office and locked the door.

In the morning, when we waited for our horses, the Professor asked the mayor if he had acquainted the authorities with the doings of the night.

"No, Sir," answered the ashamed peasant official. "This is now unnecessary for—I do not know how it occurred—in the night somebody got in to the prisoner, dragged him into the street, and murdered him with an axe."

Such was life in the Kulunda prairie, where the net of salt lakes, and the geological formations clearly indicate that here was once an immense Mid-Asiatic sea, powerful and calm; now in its dry basin seethed a life morally unhealthy and full of crime and hate—the life resulting from the coming of a people from the West to fan and wake in the soul of the Eastern people the flame of hate for a long time cold.

The cultured, honest scholar could not accept in cold

silence this final outrage of the night, and spoke strongly, accusing the peasants of demoralizing the nation, stricturing them for their crimes, and threatening them with formal arraignment to the Governor and even to the central authorities, which he really did, and for which he brought upon himself a lot of trouble and criticism for mixing in affairs that were no concern of his.

The Professor did, however, reap some reward due to him who tries to see justice done, in that the news of our attempt to save the incendiary and of his fiery protest somehow—we never knew through just what channel—reached the Kirghizi and after that they were always ready to help us in every way.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A KIRGHIZ WOLF HUNT

WHEN we reached the south shore of Kulunda Lake and put up our *yurta,* some mounted Kirghizi arrived and immediately set about helping us, swam in the lake with us, brought us the fattest sheep, took care of our horses, and acted as our guides.

One of them, named Suliman Awdzaroff, young and fine looking with the keen eyes of a bird of prey, was the companion of my expeditions round Kulunda and Kutchuk Lakes. With him as my helper, I studied the depth of the shallow lakes, the chemical composition of the water and of the ooze from the bottom, and established the fact that the lakes had been separated for a comparatively short period.

I hunted a great deal here and on other bodies of water near-by. It was not exciting or sportsmanlike shooting, as on the lakes overgrown with bulrushes were only duck and different varieties of snipe, both in such quantities that we could hardly help bringing down more than one bird at a shot. I found also on these lakes pelican and bittern, and in the prairie near them, birds of prey, among them the immense *bercout*-vulture, of the condor family. It is a brown bird with a bare neck ringed with a collar of soft gray feathers.

I shot several times at these *bercout* but without suc-

cess, as they were very cautious and it is most difficult to come within firing range of them, especially in the open prairie. As the Professor advised trying to poison them, I took some ducks and, saturating them with sublimate and strychnine, left them where I had seen the *bercout*. The first day I thus secured two specimens, the wings of one of them measuring from tip to tip seven feet nine inches. An entirely unexpected and strange result of this first catch in this manner was that from that moment neither a *bercout* nor any other bird of prey touched one of our poisoned ducks. However, two foxes and a polecat tried our bait and remained to be picked up by us.

Seeing my enthusiasm for hunting, Suliman one Sunday, smiling mysteriously, promised me a great surprise and went away. I awaited him with impatience. He soon returned with five young Kirghizi and with an excellent spare horse on which he put my saddle and invited me to accompany them. He would not tell me what he had in mind, but I felt that it would certainly be something exceptional and worth while and I was not mistaken.

After traveling over about twelve miles of prairie and coming near a large marsh covered with bushes, Suliman stopped the cavalcade and delivered himself of a very serious speech.

"The wolves often attack our herds and capture our sheep and lambs. In these bushes are their lairs and we shall hunt them."

"You rascal!" I ejaculated. "Why didn't you tell me so that I could have brought my rifle!"

"It is quite unnecessary," he answered. "We shall hunt Kirghiz fashion."

Saying this, he handed me a strange-looking whip with

a long stock and a short, strong braided lash with a heavy, lead ball firmly fastened to the end of it.

"My companions will beat the wolves from the covert and make them run out into the prairie. Our horses are fleet and we shall overtake the wolves and kill them with the whips, *kunak.*"

Three of the Kirghizi rode round to the other side of the marsh, while the remaining four of us posted ourselves along our side of the bushes and waited for the beasts. With shouts and cries the beaters ran into the covert and after only a few minutes the wolves began coming out. They ran as fast as they could, flattened to the ground, with straightened tails, and ears laid back on their necks.

"Follow, *kunak!*" cried Suliman.

I urged on my horse, which, trained for this kind of hunting, went like an arrow and began overhauling a large light-gray wolf. The beast understood what it was about and began making zigzags on the prairie to try to fool the horse. I marveled at the cleverness of my mount, as, without waiting for any indications from me, it wheeled and changed direction to the best advantage, ever racing faster and faster and always to the left of the pursued wolf to facilitate the rider's blow. It was the wildest, most blood-stirring ride that I had ever made. I seemed suddenly to have been brought into the animal kingdom and made a party to a primitive battle of wild beasts.

Gradually the wolf tired and the distance between us grew shorter. After some minutes more of the mad race, in which we must have covered miles, the beast was right there at my side.

I raised in the stirrups and struck with all my might. The wolf gave a yelp and stumbled slightly, but in a flash was off again at even faster speed. Once more that race for life between horse and wolf, and, when we again overtook it, I struck a second blow, but this time not at random, aiming at the head. After a few more jumps the wolf stumbled, fell forward, raised itself again for a few more leaps, until I struck with all my might the blow that stopped his career of sheep stealing forever.

Before I could calm my horse after its mad gallop and finish the wolf, one of the Kirghizi arrived, slipped from his saddle and cut the throat of the beast of prey.

"*Jakszi, ok jakszi djigit bek at!* (Excellent, very excellent rider and horse!)" cried one of the Kirghizi, as they rode up dragging three wolves at the end of their lassoes.

After some hours, I arrived at our *yurta,* dragging my spoil. Before the tent sat the Professor, who said he had been very anxious about me. I had been, however, quite safe with the faithful and courageous Suliman and believed that the Professor was simply irritated at being left alone, as this great scholar was very sociable and liked to talk. He was soon propitiated when we showed him the four wolves we had slain.

After this extraordinary hunt we had days of steady work. I carried out scientific reconnaissances on the Lake and in the neighboring prairies, supplementing our collections and making water analyses of the streams and wells.

During one of these expeditions, we went with Suliman far into the prairie as we were told that somewhere in that direction a saltpeter lake existed. We came upon the

lake in question near the river Irtysh but found it was an ordinary salt lake with a slight addition of magnesium salts. During this journey a mad tarantula bit my Kirghiz in the left thumb. It was the first and only case I saw during my stay in the Kirghiz prairie though this is the tarantula country. Suliman told me of the incident only sometime afterwards when his thumb was already badly swollen. Iodine did no good and soon the Kirghiz was in fever and writhing with the pain. When I again examined the thumb, I was sure that blood poisoning had set in and that an operation was unavoidable. I told this to Suliman, adding that I might of course be mistaken, but that if my diagnosis was correct he was in grave danger. We were one hundred and twelve miles away from our camp in Kulunda and the heat was oppressive.

"Then cut it off for me," answered the Kirghiz.

"I have no instruments," I replied, "only a pocket knife."

"One can kill even a bull with a pocket knife," he asserted, "and I cannot endure longer this pain, *kunak*."

I agreed and Suliman personally sharpened my knife on a stone. Afterwards, when I sterilized the thumb with alcohol, he put his hand on the same stone and said through clenched teeth:

"Cut!"

I amputated the thumb at the second joint and dressed it, marveling at and admiring the grit and patience of the Kirghiz. He did not wince or shudder nor betray his suffering with a single sound; and, when I had finished, stood up, thanked me, and calmly went to catch and saddle the horses. Fearful that I might have amputated

the thumb without just cause, I put the member in alcohol to show to Professor Zaleski on our return to Kulunda, who said when he saw it that if the operation had been delayed, the gangrene would have gone higher and the whole hand would have had to come off.

Hearing this, Suliman came to me, put his hand on my breast, then on his own and said in a solemn voice:

"I am your *kunak,* you are my *kunak* as long as I live. I swear it by the Prophet!"

Under the care of the Professor, Suliman quickly recovered and some days later was working with me on Lake Kutchuk. The part of the lake we were investigating was called Solonovka and was really nothing more than a ditch of some sixty odd feet in length filled with salt water and having a current flowing into the lake. It was a curious geologic phenomenon as in its bed bubbled cold springs with a temperature of forty-three degrees Fahrenheit while on its shores were two hot springs carrying into it water at a temperature of eighty-six and a hundred six degrees Fahrenheit respectively. Hence, in Solonovka there existed three layers of water of different temperatures.

When we finished our studies in the Kulunda steppes, we said good-bye to the Kirghizi, not thinking that we were to meet them again some weeks later in the prairie we had to traverse on our way north to the Siberian line. Now we returned to Barnaul, from where we were to work southeast into the Altai Mountains.

CHAPTER XXXV

A NOT QUITE SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION

WE spent some days in Barnaul, being very hospitably received by the mining engineers and local authorities.

It was an attractive little town with many parks filled with white birch trees and with substantial brick residences of the wealthy towns-people, who were rather numerous as the place twenty years ago was a center of a gold-mining district. On all the branches of the Ob and the Tom were gold and silver mines, great fortunes were taken from the earth and life was bright. The ladies of Barnaul not only ordered their gowns from abroad, but sent their linen to be laundered in Paris. Afterwards, the administration of the Imperial Crown Lands sequestrated the larger part of the gold-bearing territories, private enterprises were no longer permitted, and the whole of the Altai from this moment became dead. The towns Barnaul, Biisk, and Kusnetsk began to wane, and, finally, in 1918, the Bolsheviks precipitated the decline by burning Barnaul almost completely.

One evening in the house of one of the engineers I met the local Chief of the Police, Bogatchoff, who confided to me that he had run down a gang of counterfeiters, who were also well-known banditti and robbers, and that he was going to arrest them that night. He saw before

him a fight and was very evidently pleased with the prospect.

Seeing that I showed a lively interest, he proposed that I join the expedition, promising that we would return before morning.

I looked questioningly at my chief, not quite sure that such an expedition could be counted as a study in chemistry and geology; but Professor Zaleski clapped me on the shoulder and said:

"Man must remember to take from life all that is essential for him. You are a scientist, but also a writer. You are making your chemical studies in the prairie; here in the town you must collect your literary themes. Go ahead, it may prove very interesting. Only take my revolver with you."

But I knew this revolver of the Professor's. It was an archeological specimen, a bulldog of the oldest model, impossibly rusted, and with only two cartridges. It was always on the list of the things taken by the Professor when on his expeditions, but was as regularly hidden in the depths of one of the boxes, so buried that it was hopeless to try to find it. I did not find it this time either, but Bogatchoff provided me with a good Nagan revolver and a dark lantern. By nine o'clock I was already seated in a large *tarantas* drawn by four excellent horses. For my vis-à-vis, I had an immense red-haired policeman named Sokoloff with a merry devil-may-care expression.

"Are the robbers numerous?" I asked the Chief of Police.

"There are five of them," he answered and, seeing that I showed astonishment at the smallness of our detachment, he began to laugh and explained:

"Sokoloff alone will suffice for them, because he is a machine and not a man. We are three and will divide the task thus: Sokoloff will arrest two, I two, and you one man. Will you agree?"

I was willing to to assume my share.

"How am I to take him?"

"You mean how are you to hold him?" laughed Bogatchoff. "Take him by the throat, otherwise he will escape."

"Hm," I grunted. To tell the truth I should have preferred to be a spectator of this bout, without taking any active part in it and not to be obliged to fasten on someone's throat.

Meanwhile the Chief of Police and his companion discussed the plan of attack. We traveled along the shore of the river for some hours before the lights of a big village were visible in the distance. We approached the first house and Sokoloff called to the terrified host to come out to him. When the *tarantas* was in the yard, Sokoloff ordered the policeman acting as coachman to allow no one to go out of the house and directed the host to take us to the boat and row in the direction indicated.

We went down stream for a considerable distance, rowing until midnight and perhaps even later. Finally, we picked up the rays of a lamp shining from a small house on the bank. Sokoloff turned to the rowing peasant, took him by the throat, tied his hands, and gagged him. Then, taking the oars himself, he grunted as he rowed:

"Now he will not whistle and warn the criminals, with whom all these peasants are on friendly terms."

We landed under a high bank covered with bushes

overhanging the water, and, leaving the bound peasant in the bottom of his big, long river boat, crept through the forest to the house. The criminals evidently felt quite secure as there was no guard, so we approached the window and had a look into the room.

Near the table in the light of a big oil lamp sat two men, one looking at banknotes and the other arranging them in different packages; while the other three were busy around a little press manufacturing these notes.

"They are assisting the Minister of Finance," whispered Bogatchoff, nudging me with his shoulder, "but I fear it is necessary to stop them."

Sokoloff advanced first, dark lantern in hand, Bogatchoff followed and I came third. As Sokoloff suddenly opened the door and sprang in the room, one of the criminals smashed the lamp to the floor and thus threw the room into darkness. A revolver shot by the criminals opened the battle and right after it in the light of a lantern appeared a face on which an immense fist landed. A struggle began, silent and desperate, as the two policemen pushed the men towards a corner and kept in such close contact with them that they could not use their firearms. I heard a mingling of heavy blows, groans, and the noise of falling bodies. But the money-makers broke the enveloping movement to the corner and a wild race around the room began. I was sent spinning to the floor and a heavy foot kicked me in the head. Barely on my feet, I received a sickening blow in the eye and a second one behind the ear that made me sway like a drunken man and also made me furious. Spotting a malignant face with my lantern. I swung at it only to have it disappear as though it went underground.

"Well," I heard the voice of Sokoloff call out, "this one will lie quiet some minutes!"

Just then a heavy fist fell again on my neck. As I swung my lantern around I covered a powerful neck and landed on it with all my force. The neck shuddered and turned and brought into light the face of . . . Bogatchoff!

"It is not the game to beat your friends!" he roared, as he struggled with one of the criminals whom he held by the throat.

I had no time to apologize as I had to settle with my aggressor who had slipped under the table; but I had time to think that the first blow which bowled me over as a thunderbolt must have come from a friend, as no one but Bogatchoff or Sokoloff could have struck with such power. I managed to get my man and, after some minutes, the gang, with arms tied and heads bent down, were escorted by us to the boat. Sokoloff carried the bag with the money and the plates, while the Chief of Police with his revolver in hand covered the manufacturers. I was acting as rear-guard, nursing my blackened eye and rubbing my badly bruised neck. I was curious to see my face in a glass as I feared that it would be a sight; but I was surprised when I really did see how far my fears fell short of the reality.

Sokoloff freed the terrified peasant from his gag and shackles, then tied the prisoners by the feet like geese and put them into the boat. We pushed from the bank and rowed towards the village with the peasant spurred to supreme effort under the towering domination of Sokoloff. When we were well out in the stream, one of the captives suddenly writhed like a snake and sprang

into the air, striking the gunwale so heavily that the boat shipped water and was almost capsized. I had only just time to remark that as he fell in the water with a splash, the rapid current snatched him off into the darkness that hid the bold adventurer. The policemen shot several times in his direction, but without other sound than the "plop" of the bullets in the water. When we were near the village we heard from far down stream a distant, long-drawn cry. Was it the shout of triumph of the counterfeiter as he reached shore, or the last note in the struggle for life, after which the rapid, deep Ob took only a criminal's mortal remains to their cold prison in the Arctic deep?

Bogatchoff ordered the *tarantas* to be made ready and commanded three peasants to help guard the prisoners while we went to the mayor of the village to take tea.

The room, lighted with only a small oil lamp, was rather dark, but, noticing a looking glass on the wall, I approached it to inspect the state of my face.

The sight shocked me. The right eye was entirely black and so swollen that only a small slit remained through which peeped the despairing member; a large bloody bruise was on my forehead from the kick I got while on the floor; while my neck was so swollen and painful that I could with difficulty move my head.

"Well, what a mess they made of me," I observed trying to look cheerful and laughing rather dryly.

"Yes!" confirmed Bogatchoff, "your face is rather ugly. But it will not last long. I have an excellent remedy for that sort of thing, and when you are off in the mountains it will shock no one."

The professional coldness of the Chief of Police in

respect to my face did not please me, but nothing was to be done. I tied my handkerchief over my eye and washed my swollen neck with cold water.

"Why, that's nothing!" laughed Bogatchoff. "You also hit me a fine one on the neck. War is war. Better take some tea!"

In the morning we were back in Barnaul, where the Professor, after having dressed my wounds, shook his head and observed:

"Well, well! They did make a picture of you during this expedition. I don't know whether you collected literary material or not, but you brought back a real specimen!"

In my pained and angry mood these remarks of the Professor seemed out of place and pointless.

For some weeks I had a very languid and sad-looking eye and a stiff neck as reminders of the unusual expedition against the voluntary assistants of the Minister of Finance.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A SEEKER OF GOLD

IN Barnaul Professor Zaleski presented me to his former pupil Dr. Zass, a student of his from the time when the Professor was president of the University of Tomsk. Dr. Zass was a big, thin German with blue short-sighted eyes and ever-matted hair of a nondescript color. He was known in the district of Altai as an excellent surgeon, who never drank nor played cards but had one ruling passion of which his wife complained—that is, he was an enthusiastic hunter, a first-rate shot, and a fine sportsman.

Our acquaintance began with Zass's taking me to his study and showing me his collection of weapons; there were rifles of all descriptions from all the best-known factories and for every kind of hunting. The Bohemian Lebeda, Belgian Lepage, English Scott, Pardey, Lancaster, Holland and Holland, American Winchester and Remington, German Sauer, and several Swedish and French makes. Having showed them all to me he looked at me through his thick eye-glasses and said:

"Do you know, Sir, we shall go and hunt bustards. The little ones have already begun to fly and the old males are flocking together."

Of course, I was nothing loath, and only a few hours later, was beside the doctor in his little carriage winding

through the birch woods with his spaniel following us. When about a mile from town, as we were crossing a big forest meadow of high grass, the spaniel straightened out its head and tail and advanced cautiously to a clump of bush on the side. The Doctor stopped the horse and snatched his gun just as a flock of young black-cock started from the covert. After shooting twice and bringing down two birds, the Doctor reloaded with incredible speed and had time to add one more young cock to his pair.

I was astonished by the accuracy and speed of his shooting. In my whole life, I had met only one other hunter with such skill, the well-known Siberian gold mine owner, K. J. Ivanitsky, who was also widely known in Petrograd and Monaco.

Thus on our way to the real hunting ground of the day, we shot twenty-four black-cock. Finally, the birch woods finished and before us stretched the northern part of the Belyaga steppe. Topping a small ridge, we had before us a broad plain and on it a flock of bustards feeding.

Through our glasses we could plainly make out these tall gray birds with their long legs and whiskers round the beaks. They were very like hen-turkeys, only thinner and taller. Among the old ones we saw many young birds jumping about and fighting continuously. On seeing us they began to move off, apparently quite slowly, but really getting away at good speed.

Zass left only the headstall on the horse and, taking the reins in his hand, directed me to walk with him close to the side of the horse away from the birds. A simple but long strategic maneuver began in which we made a

big circle around the flock and then, with ever-decreasing ones, worked gradually in until we were within seventy paces of the birds. At this distance they showed signs of nervousness and preparation for flight, so that the Doctor commanded:

"Shoot, Sir, but aim well, for you will have time to shoot only twice."

We jumped from behind the horse and shot from all four barrels, Zass killing two and I wounding one in the wing; I had a good race after him in the prairie, during which he ran as if he were an ostrich and kept a long time out of range. Finally, after the loss of much blood and evidently affected by the pain, he slowed down enough to give me another chance. The bird was an old male, weighing twenty-eight pounds, a prize well worth the trip of twenty-five miles in the dust.

While at Barnaul, I made several expeditions out of the town with some of our new acquaintances. During one of these trips, we ran across a dilapidated, sad figure in ragged dress walking along the bank of the Ob. On seeing us he approached and asked for a cigarette, saying that he had not had a smoke for three days. When we questioned him, he told us the usual story of the gold district of Siberia. He had been a minor postal official and, having saved some money, he had decided to look for gold and make millions. For ten roubles some helpful spirit showed him a sure place for pay dirt into which he put his faith, savings, and the work of a summer without taking anything out.

"What are you going to do now?" I asked him.

"I am looking for a raft on the Ob to take me to Novo-Nikolaievsk, from where I shall try to reach Tomsk, to return to the Post Office and be a scribbler again."

"You are disgusted then with these millions!" one of our party put in.

"Oh, no," answered the unfortunate seeker of wealth with an energetic toss of his head, "I shall put some capital together and return here, where I am sure I shall eventually strike it rich."

"It is a long chance you are taking when you cannot make proper geological observations," I suggested to him.

"It is difficult without these, I admit," he answered, "but the thing is already in my blood. This is the fifth time I have tried and I am accustomed to it; but I have faith in my luck."

As he sat eating some bread and butter which we gave him from our supplies, he recounted to us a number of tales of his adventurous life.

"Once I was seeking gold near the town of Kusnetsk on the river Tom. I lost everything and, with only fifty kopecks in my pocket, I waited for a raft. Finally, I saw a small one of only ten logs floating along on the current. At the stern of the raft was a fire built on stones where the owner was making his tea. The man steered the raft with the help of a big crudely fashioned sweep. As I hailed him he swung the raft toward the shore and I began to bargain with him. He was going to Tomsk and wanted a rouble (fifty cents) to take me with him, and only when I turned out all my pockets to show him that I had only half a rouble he agreed to take me for this price. As we journeyed down stream the raft, made of freshly cut timber, after some days began to sink so that by the time we reached Tomsk we had the water up around our waists. The peasants in the villages along the shores looked at us in wonder and ridiculed us with questions:

" 'Where is your ship? On what are you navigating?'

"It is quite easy for those on the bank to sneer at such mariners while each new rapid or sharp turn in the river threatened us with destruction as we had to hold with superhuman strength to our sinking raft. The skin came off our feet, bodies, and hands because of the continual immersion.

"The captain of the raft, as he sighted the domes of the Tomsk churches, said in a voice full of disdain:

" 'I took a cheap fare from you for this journey of over three hundred and fifty miles!'

"Most of the time in the raft I had spent trying to figure out what the physical laws were that governed our floating and this made it easy for me to justify the questions of our peasant friends along the shore. But we did eventually arrive and that was the most important thing, not the fare I had paid Some days later I sat again in the Post Office, registering letters and dreaming about the wealth which ultimately cannot fail me. I know and feel that I was born to be a millionaire."

Saying this, he smoked nonchalantly and with proud mien drank the milk from our hunting bottle.

In the autumn, such types are often to be met on the Siberian rivers, adventurers, bold and risking everything, yet dreamers at the same time. Many of them perish in the Siberian forests or in the waters of the river, as well as from sheer hunger and weakness; but others inevitably follow them, attracted by the lure of gold, this power of our age to which so much energy, sacrifice, and inventive genius are consecrated.

CHAPTER XXXVII

BEFORE THE FACE OF GOD

FINALLY, we left Barnaul, after having finished some complicated chemical analyses in the laboratory of the Mines Administration.

After ferrying to the right bank of the Ob, we went southeast to the town of Biisk where the two rivers of Katun and Biya, coming from under glaciers of the Altais, join to form the river Ob. It was a typical Siberian town with about five thousand inhabitants, very picturesquely situated on the river Biya, a rapid, cold emerald stream, which winds its way between rocky banks thickly overgrown with forests.

From Biisk I made an excursion to the town of Kusnetsk on the Tom, which was then a very lonely spot, but which became the center of a great industrial region after the discovery of immense deposits of coking coal and high-grade iron ore. Before the advent of the Soviet Government, the construction of large metallurgic and chemical plants was begun which in time will surely be a great source of wealth to this section of Siberia. I gathered some specimens of coal and ore and brought them back for Professor Zaleski's collection. In the neighborhood of the town I visited some very mediocre gold mines.

On my return to Biisk, I found the Professor had been

summoned by telegraph for some business to Barnaul. Taking advantage of his absence to make some further excursions into the Altai, I hired a horse, took a good equipment of hunting supplies, and followed along the right bank of the Katun toward the south. My road wound through picturesque pine forests and mountain scenery and crossed cold, foaming streams. These forests were magnificent, without underbush or high grass, but with towering close-set pines whose softly nodding heads were always whispering something mysterious to one another.

I stopped for dinner in a little village where no grown-up people were at home as everybody was busy in the hay-fields. Only dogs and children played in the single street. In one house I discovered a very old deaf woman, to whom I explained by signs that I wanted food.

"I have no bread and milk as the master locked the larder; but I can fry fish for you," she explained.

"Very well," I exclaimed, "fry your fish!"

"Peter, Peter!" called she, leaning out of the window, "come here. A guest has come. Go catch some fish."

"Oh," I shouted at her in protest, "you've still got to catch them? I shall die of hunger before they are ready."

"Not at all, Sir, they will be here immediately," answered the old woman as she began cleaning the frying-pan.

The boy of some ten years perhaps, took down from the loft an oblong basket tied to a short stick and started out.

"Wait a moment," I cried, "I will go with you."

The boy led me to a small but deep brook, where he found a place with an artificial waterfall, which had made a deep hole in the rocky soil. When the boy put the basket into the hole as one puts a spoon in a dish, and dipped it through the pool, I saw that the old woman was right. We had five rather large *khairus* or Asiatic trout and, after a few minutes, a supply sufficient for even such a hungry traveler as myself. Half an hour later I was already enjoying our choice catch and thanking Providence that Asiatic streams provide such ready and delicious supplies for hungry travelers.

As I continued along the Katun, night overtook me at a little village counting no more than fifteen houses. Searching out one that seemed a little cleaner than the others, I asked for shelter.

"Please come in," said the host, a serious-looking old peasant. "You will have company as another traveler, a lady, has just arrived from Ongudai."

He led my horse to the stable, while I took my leather bag and entered the room where I saw by the light of the oil lamp a young woman dressed in black with large dark eyes and an intelligent, sad face. As I bowed to her, she gave me a far from cordial look and hardly bent her head in response. During the supper with the hosts, I talked with her and learned that she was the wife of an engineer and that they had come together to Ongudai, a health resort in the Altai Mountains much frequented by the inhabitants of western Siberia. I was astonished to see her alone in this village on an unfrequented road, but I asked no questions as it was no concern of mine.

Just as we were finishing supper, the door opened

noiselessly and a thin, tall man entered. He had burning eyes and long black hair falling over his shoulders, already streaked with gray. He wore the cloth of a monk with a large silver crucifix suspended round his neck on a heavy silver chain.

He crossed himself and sat down at the table without anyone's having spoken. Respect and terror lurked in the eyes of the peasants, as they looked at the new guest. He sat upright, silent, and motionless. Covertly observing him, I noticed, as his gaze met the sad, almost tragic eyes of the woman, that she suddenly blushed and afterwards paled perceptibly; and from the spasmodic twitching of her thin fingers, I readily perceived the agitation that was gripping her. The Monk also sat with fingers interlaced and pressed together until the color mottled all his hands.

Something was passing in this room and in this solitary village, but what? My literary instincts forced me to remain here to see the drama through.

The monk drank a glass of tea, stood up, blessed all present, and said in a toneless, but significant manner:

"Tomorrow is Sunday. I will celebrate the office."

Once more he looked sharply and piercingly at the stranger sitting with low-bent head, raised his hand in blessing, with a sweeping gesture made the sign of the cross over the whole company and went out, carefully closing the door after him.

Silence prevailed for a long time in the room.

I carefully watched all the people at table and my mind searched each face, lost in surmises.

"He is terrible, this monk," the host finally said with a heavy sigh.

"Oh, yes," echoed the two simple peasant women. "Terrible!"

"He is a holy man," protested the unknown woman in a warm and unexpectedly strong voice. "This monk speaks great truths; and, if they are terrible, are not our sins hundreds of times more terrible? He, the holy one, suffers the more for us."

During these impetuous words, my attention was drawn to a window where I happened to see a shadow appear, only to disappear at once. After a moment, it appeared again and then I discerned a pale face with eyes full of fear.

"I must have a look at my horse," I said and went out.

I crept quickly to the corner of the house and looked cautiously around to see a well-dressed man, oblivious of everything around him, gazing through the window. Now I was certain that something very serious was being enacted in this solitary corner of the great forest.

I went back to the house and settled down for the night. Over the thin partition I heard the woman with the tragic face weeping and praying for a long time until finally I fell asleep to the sound of her warm, passionate prayers to God, who gives peace and the wish for life.

On waking in the morning I drank some milk and, under the pretence of hunting, took my gun and went out. I hid among some bushes on the mountain slope and watched. Before long some men and women came out from the houses, crossing themselves devoutly, and took a side road into the forest; and soon the unknown woman followed them in the same direction. When they were well in advance, I started quietly on their trail. After I had made about two miles, I suddenly heard a

noise in the bushes and the sound of steps. I raised my rifle.

"Don't shoot," came in clear well-spoken tones and from among the bushes emerged the man whom I had seen looking into the window the night before. I recognized him at once by his dress and his small, neat beard.

As I looked at him questioningly, he understood and whispered with a despairing movement of his hand:

"I can say nothing, I can't, I don't dare. . . . But I know there will be a great misfortune."

I felt that I had not the right to probe any further seeing his despair and terror; and, offering him a cigarette, I asked indifferently:

"Where does this road lead?"

He raised his terrified eyes and said:

"To a little *skeet* (sectarian chapel), where the office will be celebrated."

"Well, good-bye," I replied, taking to the road as he returned to the bushes.

The forest meanwhile had begun a loud conversation, dull and foreboding. The wind swayed and tormented the tops of the trees. An immense, dark-gray cloud, messenger of the storm, sailed across the lowering sky. White cloudlets, torn and feathery, continually changing their outlines, raced before it. Somewhere in the thicket a sparrow-hawk shrieked, while over the forest a flow of crows were circling with their dismal caws.

The road winding through the forest brought me out on a large marsh covered with bushes and bulrushes where the soft earth gave under my feet and undulated

so that the bushes near-by trembled and leaned with each step I took. I realized that the road had beneath it a deep, quaking bog.

I tramped for nearly an hour still, when I reached a large forest meadow heavily flanked with trees. At the further end of the meadow I saw a small chapel of larch logs, blackened by time and surmounted by a little cupola with a cross upon it. Some peasants from another village were just entering as I arrived, so I went in with them. The interior was dark and narrow and overcrowded by the fifty odd people in the congregation. I took my post in the darkest corner and began to look around. Near the single small window was a common deal table with a brass cross and a Bible on it. In the left corner, hung an ikon of the Christ, black from age, before which two small wax candles flickered dimly in a hanging support. The little tongues of fire subsided or augmented, sending shadows and lights over the surface of the picture, over this likeness of the Saviour of the World with its crown of thorns and its expression of pain and sorrow. At times the eyes seemed to gain life, and the mouth to smile with an expression of suffering and pity. The peasants looked with awe upon this almost lifelike face of the Son of God and, falling on their knees, crossed themselves and bowed their foreheads to the ground.

Before the table stood immobile as though carven in black stone, the figure of the monk with burning eyes, pale, gazing steadily through the window and whispering something with his thin lips. Not far from the table I observed the unknown woman, kneeling, her eyes fixed on the ground and evidently deep in prayer.

Suddenly the monk turned with a quick movement to the congregation, penetrating them with his burning eyes, and pronounced in his dominating voice:

"I see now, with the eyes of my soul, the approaching God, the Creator of the World and of our souls; God, the source of all happiness and good; God, the Judge of human sins. Pray and ask him with the voice of your souls, through the fire of your hearts, that He descend among us in living form and show Himself unto us, allowing us sinful ones to be in His presence."

Having said this, he bent almost to the earth, in a pose of supplication and remorse, stretched out his hands and went through the congregation who opened a way for him. As he passed, they dropped on their knees and began fervently their whispered prayers, bowing their heads to the ground and sighing in hysterical fear and remorse.

"Lord, The Merciful One! Lord, The Judge and Great Ruler!" came the prayer of the monk from outside the chapel walls. "Come to Thy temple where Thy flock will do Thy will, when Thou hast entered into Thy house!"

The crowd stiffened in expectation and terror and knelt with bated breath. As if in answer to the prayers of the monk, the dull and rumbling voice of the forest was heard, the forest shaken by the rising wind. The sound of thunder, still far away, rolled in the air and struck against the walls of the chapel.

"Here are Thy servants and slaves, O Lord," I heard the approaching voice of the monk pronounce. "They are ready to give their blood for the sins of the world to wash out the stains from the earth!"

Again the sounds of the storm rolled in on the rising wind.

After a moment I saw the monk. He was coming into the chapel backward, crawling on his knees with his face almost touching the earth and seeming to lead an invisible figure with his outstretched hand. He passed through the door of the chapel where no one dared to look, as everybody was held in the grasp of a powerful, deistic terror. I looked at the monk and saw that no one was before him. I realized that the wind, thunder, storm, and the forest shaken by it, happened to be answering to the words of the monk with burning eyes; but at the same time I felt that a terror was creeping into my heart and that my brain was refusing to work coolly and logically.

I looked at the woman. She continued to kneel, but she had turned her face to the ikon of Christ, and from her widely opened eyes, full of tears, hope, and the torture of expectation, shone such a faith that I felt as though I had been transported back into the earliest Christian times to some catacomb of Rome in the days of Nero or Caligula among those who would tomorrow kneel in the arena as the prey of wild beasts or of the cruel African slaves.

My thoughts were interrupted by the monk who jumped to his feet, seeming like a giant. Then, waving his arm in despair, he fell again to the ground, raised himself, ran to the table and returned to the door. Finally, he cried out hoarsely:

"Thou goest away? . . . Thou leavest Thy flock a prey to sin and crime? Leave us not, Thou Great and Merciful One! Accept our sacrifice!"

Once more he fell to the ground, raised himself, reentered the chapel and cried in a breathless, choked voice, full of domination and command:

"He leaves us, God's people! The Creator and King leaves us. . . . Again crime, sin and horror will reign on the earth! With your blood ask Him to come! With blood . . . Hurry! . . . Hurry!"

The monk's voice reached the depths of the soul, called, killed the will, ordered, and changing finally into a sibilant whisper, repeated:

"Hurry! . . . Hurry!"

Groans, sobs, and heavy sighs were audible in the low, stuffy room; a movement was perceptible in one corner where the crowd, pressing one another, quickly made way for a young, big and broad-shouldered peasant who advanced trembling to the altar repeating only one word:

"I . . . I . . . I . . ."

Something for which I was totally unprepared took place. The peasant brandished a hunting knife and fell with his throat slashed.

The monk stood over the dying man and cried in an awful, broken voice:

"Fall on your faces . . . on your faces. . . . He is coming . . . He, the Great God Merciful. The Lord who has accepted this blood for the sins of the world!"

At this moment, just as everyone prostrated himself, a blinding light dazzled my eyes and terrific thunder shook the forest, the chapel seemed to have been blown up, earth and dust fell from the ceiling and the small window crashed in a thousand pieces.

The frightened peasants, believing implicitly that this fortuitous bolt of lightning on their chapel was the veri-

table voice of God, and little realizing that the monk was using the ordinary manifestations of Nature to work upon their overwrought minds in the furtherance of his suicide propaganda, lay on the floor, trembling, afraid to look up into the face of God, and once more hear His terrible voice. They lay, hiding their faces in their hands and without realizing that the sacrificial victim was already silent forever.

The first to regain her presence of mind was the unknown woman, who, looking with terror at the young suicide and gathering her dress to avoid touching the pool of blood, stepped carefully among the crouching peasants till she reached the door, where she broke into a terrific run, pressing her head with her pale hands and mumbling incoherently.

As the monk saw the flight of the woman, he ran regardlessly over the prostrated peasants to the door and quickly overtook her. I was out of the chapel in a flash in time to see him catch her, gather her in his embrace and cover her mouth, eyes, and neck with kisses. With a supreme struggle and a despairing cry she escaped from his hands, pushing him from her, and ran in the direction of the forest. The monk followed her.

I ran after him to defend the woman. As the forest closed around me, I saw some one running among the bushes ahead of me, but I could not make out who it was. At a turn of the road I saw the monk, in an attempt to cut off the woman's flight, run out on the marsh. Suddenly I heard his voice with a changed and terrified note in it crying:

"Oh . . . Oh! Help me!"

I had almost reached the place from which the cry of

the monk came, when suddenly a shot rang out. Sinking in the peat-bog at every step I forced my way with difficulty through the bushes until suddenly I stopped, petrified.

A small forest meadow covered with bright green moss was before me. Already the bog was sucking the man down into its abyss and on the surface there remained only the pale face with eyes staring open and begging for mercy and the blood-stained brow smashed by the shot. The ghastly face disappeared in a moment and in its place remained only a little puddle of black water with bubbles breaking its surface.

In the bushes stood the man whom I had seen yesterday evening under the window and whom I had met today in the forest. He had a rifle in his hand, and was looking with hate at the black water spot on the green treacherous carpet of the bog. He raised his head and our eyes met.

"The sentence was terrible and severe, but man's hand had to reach him," he said in a low, trembling voice.

For a long time we remained in silence, deep in thought and awed by our sensations. I realized that this half-mad monk, creator of the gruesome sect of suiciders, this exhorter demanding blood of the faithful to wash away the sins of the world, this persecutor of the calm, sad woman who had been enslaved by his mystic strength and eloquence, merited death; but I still felt doubtful. After a long silence I asked:

"Why did you do this?"

"I am the husband of this woman," was the despairing answer.

The forest rustled in a tremor; I seemed to feel the suspense of all nature, a suspense which, like the timorous,

cautious beast, hid in the forest among the bushes over this abyss with its covering of green moss and aquatic plants. A small bird peeped sadly, a raven cried, a tree broken by the storm cracked, and suddenly the marsh spoke with a voice of wild and cruel triumph. Thoughts were racing through my brain; a decision was born, gathered strength and finally matured.

I looked at the pale man with the eyes of hate and said:

"I was hunting, and met no one and saw nothing."

I turned and went through the bushes towards the road.

"Thank you," reached me in a warm, moving half whisper.

The first drops of rain were falling as I hurried quickly along the forest road on my way back to the house.

That same day I left this village that was the home of Stefan Klesnikoff, the bloody sectarian monk escaped from some monastery. I left also behind me the unknown woman and the avenging husband still trembling with hate, little thinking that I was ever to see them elsewhere.

As the last of the village fences disappeared, from the rest and marsh were borne to me myriad sylvan voices with the one ever-recurring groan:

"Oh. . . . Oh!"

But it was only the echo of the events and impressions of this tragic day.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A BEAR HUNT AND A SHAMAN'S CURSE

AFTER these events in this little village, I continued my way along the bank of the Katun, greatly troubled in mind. Questioning thoughts and uncontrollable feelings plagued me.

Nothing could displace these and give pleasure, even though the weather was splendid, nature around me rich, and the views of mountain and forest magnificent. I ate nothing the whole day and came to Ongudai at nightfall. It is a picturesque village on the right bank of the river. Near it the Katun was everywhere being fed by roaring, foaming mountain streams, leaping down their stone steps directly from the eternal snows of the principal range of the Great Altai. It was already after sundown when I arrived and saw before me to the south the peak of Byelukha in its long snow-covered range now mantled in the pink of the last rays of the sun.

It was noisy and crowded in Ongudai, as all the people were out in the streets admiring in the silent warm twilight the magnificent sunset and the Queen of the picturesque Altai, the Byelukha, in her robes of evening hue.

I met here my friends from Barnaul and went to stay the night with them. The following morning there arrived Engineer X and his wife, who had a house just next door to my friends. When I made their acquaintance

that same day, I found they were none other than the two remaining actors in the gruesome forest tragedy on the road across the marsh where their wild emotions with the wilder Nemesis were seen by me alone—except for God and Nature.

I remained in Ongudai three days which I spent hunting with Engineer Wolski and one of the local Tartars.

Near the village the mountains begin to rise abruptly to great heights and embrace many delightful Alpine meadows where one readily finds deer and their traditional enemy, the bear. Ascending one of these ranges, we came upon such a meadow covered with high and succulent grass. Wolski studied the place carefully through his field-glasses and soon beckoned me to him. As I approached, he gave me the glasses and bade me look in the direction of a thicket of rhododendrons which bordered the immense meadow on the south. I nearly shouted for joy when I discovered a superb deer with large antlers quietly feeding in the thick grass, a second lying near-by and the antlers of a third showing above the bushes. As the deer were about five thousand yards away, we had to get nearer them for any reliable shooting. Then began the difficult part of the hunt, for it was necessary to scramble to a higher plateau and there, after having crawled to the covering of bushes, to work through the thick grass and underbrush, badly scratching our hands and faces and tearing our clothes; but evidently we crawled well, as the deer showed no signs of alarm. The fact that the wind was blowing from the animals towards us helped us materially. Finally, tired and bloody with scratches, we arrived at twelve hundred yards from our quarry with an elevation of from sixty to

eighty feet above them. Having allotted our targets, we rested our rifles on the bushes and fired simultaneously. We gave a whoop of joy when we found that our bullets carried true and all three animals lay still. Only after a moment the one among the bushes disappeared suddenly and we could follow his course by the movement of the bushes further on. It was evident that the animal was so wounded that it could not rise and was consequently crawling through the bushes. Leaping over the stones and through the brush, we ran to our targets. Two were stone dead and the third was nowhere visible. The broken bushes and trampled grass showed plainly the course of the crawling deer. We even found considerable blood an the grass, but suddenly all traces disappeared. We looked about in astonishment and the Tartar asked:

"What has happened? It could not change into vapor."

Then Wolski, looking around, suddenly exclaimed:

"Look, look over there on the ridge!"

We looked and understood it all; for there on a gradual slope a big bear was traveling with the deer on his back. It had evidently been stalking the deer just as we had and, after our services in the matter, had snatched the nearest and dragged it through the thicket until it came to a clear place where it could sling it across its back and make for the forest below.

"Oh, you devil!" cried the Tartar, "you stole my booty. We shall see whether you keep it or not!"

He went full speed after the robber, springing down from rock to rock in such a way that we trembled for his life; but this native of the mountains was strong, light, and supple as a mountain sheep and never stumbled or fell. The distance between him and the bear, bur-

dened with its heavy prey, quickly diminished. Finally, the Tartar stopped at about two thousand yards, aimed and shot, only to quicken the speed of the bear. The Tartar took up the chase again and shot next time at what looked to us no more than one thousand yards. The bear stumbled and let go of the deer, roaring and angrily tearing the grass and earth. The Tartar ran nearer and shot for the third and last time.

Three deer and a bear taken in this unusual manner —such were the trophies of the morning! We spent the rest of the day doing to the nearest village to secure horses and wagons to take our booty to Ongudai, where we arrived in the evening, flushed and pleased with our brilliant success.

We started out again the following morning. Passing through a little village of Black or *Kara* Tartars, we stopped to change our horses. Besides the host, we found in the house a small thin Tartar with a face badly marked by small-pox. He stammered as he spoke, and begged that we pay him a rouble and take him with us, as he knew a place where three bears, one of them a very large, old, and vicious fellow, were in the habit of feeding.

When we told him that he was too old and weak for such a hunt, he protested and to prove that he would be useful, said that he could smell a bear from far away, a claim which the host confirmed.

In spite of all this we decided not to take the old Tartar, giving him twenty kopecks as a consolation. He refused them with disdain and began to murmur in his stammering voice:

"It will not be a success . . . it will not be! I am a

shaman-wizard and I see this and know it. You will meet bears, one . . . two . . . three, yes, three but you will kill none. You will have a loss, bigger than a rouble, bigger than a rouble!"

Laughing, Wolski exclaimed:

"Well, old man, if I meet a bear don't be worried. I shall hit it even if five *shamans* and twenty-five *shaitans* (devils) dwell within you! I know how to shoot. Look!"

With these words he leaned out of the window and aimed at a pigeon in a tree. A shot, and the pigeon fell.

But the *shaman* was not beaten. He took from his pocket a bit of stone with some signs on it and touched our rifles with it.

"It will be bad, it will be bad!" he grunted and, murmuring angrily, left the room.

Meanwhile, the horses had been made ready and we went farther on till we came to the mouth of a stream called Shurmak, where we found forests, not very thick, but full of moss and wild berries, a place loved by bear as old experienced hunters told us the day before in Ongudai.

Leaving our wagon there, we struck into the woods. After we had traveled a considerable distance, we suddenly discovered a bear scrambling along the mountain. When we hurried in that direction we found our way cut off by a soft bog which we could not cross, and so had to give up the chase. Then, after wandering for a considerable time through the forest, Wolski came upon two bears at close range. He felt quite sure he said, that they were already his. He fired but the bullet lodged in the barrel of his rifle and the lock blew off, striking and

wounding him in the side of the head so that he fell. I met no bears at all.

Damned *shaman!* Why were we so niggardly with one rouble!

I began to be superstitious. All hunters are full of superstition and I am no exception in this respect. And he who is not superstitious is not a real hunter, as this is part and parcel of a certain type of hunter's bliss. It is the recrudescence of atavism, for his ability in hunting was the dominating factor that raised elemental man in the struggle with his forest competitors; and primitive man, the child of Nature, cannot help being superstitious. After losing two days over this hunt which had been cursed by the *shaman,* we returned to Ongudai ashamed and bearing one spoiled rifle. Here I found a letter from Professor Zaleski summoning me to Barnaul.

CHAPTER XXXIX

ESCAPING FROM A PRAIRIE *HANOOM*

I FOUND the Professor very angry at having received from Petrograd an order to visit Lake Chany near the town of Kainsk, the principal reservoir for the villages of new colonists sent into this region from European Russia. The Government had no reliable data regarding the character of the water of this immense lake; and besides there were other orders which compelled a change in the Professor's plan for visiting the mineral lakes near the river Irtysh and for exploring the prairies belonging to the Great and Little Kirghiz Horde, along the banks of this noble river.

As our examination would necessitate searching out all sorts of small lakes about which we had no information, we would have to have a guide. Knowing that we could not find a better one than our Suliman, we decided to travel *via* Kulunda to look up our faithful Kirghiz.

We found him in camp between Barnaul and Kulunda, near the eastern border of the prairie. He was overjoyed at seeing us and willingly accepted our proposal, disappointed only at the news that we were returning to Petrograd from the town of Kainsk. He asked us for some hours' leave to attend to certain business matters and went away. Returning after sundown with a young camel, he ostentatiously offered it to me as a gift to his

faithful *kunak* who had amputated his thumb for him. It was difficult to explain to him that I could not travel to the capital on this ship of the desert, and that I should frighten all horses in Petrograd if I appeared on the Nevsky Prospekt on its back; but at last he understood.

We remained for the night in the village of Kulunda, but I remarked that Suliman was again absent. When I asked our host about him, he told me that the Kirghiz had gone away on the camel. However, when we awoke in the morning, Suliman appeared to announce that our carriage was ready, our boxes and bags stowed, and that we could start as soon as we chose. After the morning tea we set out with Suliman, well mounted, riding ahead, while near the carriage, always on my side, rode a young Kirghiz, a mere boy, with really beautiful, swarthy face and dark dreamy eyes. During the course of the day I remarked that, following Suliman's orders, the boy attended upon and served me exclusively. He very carefully and ceremoniously poured tea for me and loaded my plate with food, packed my things, brushed my clothes and boots, and fetched water for drinking and washing.

In the evening, when preparing my bed, he placed near it a bouquet of flowers. Much amused, I asked him if Suliman had ordered him to be so touchingly attentive.

"Yes, master," he answered in his melodious voice, "but I do it with joy, as now I am your *hanoom* (first wife)!"

I was flabbergasted, and immediately pictured the despair of my mother and the ridicule of my friends at the sight of my "first wife." The situation was very stupid and I felt that it was going to be much more difficult to refuse the *hanoom* than the camel.

After consulting the Professor, who took a very profane view of this new adventure of mine, I called Sulimán to have a talk with him.

"How am I to understand the words of this boy?" I asked severely.

"What boy?" he answered, returning question for question and shrugging his shoulders. "This is Bibi-Ainé, my younger sister, and I have commanded her to be your *hanoom, kunak,* and I give her to you as I would offer you a camel, a horse, or a dog. From today Bibi-Ainé is your slave, your chattel, to do your will. She is thirteen years old and is the most beautiful among our girls. Take her and be happy!"

I talked for a long time before coming round to the fact that I could not accept this gift, and saw Suliman lay his hand on his knife as I phrased my refusal.

"This is an offence and an infamy against the whole tribe, *kunak,*" he cried, with snapping eyes, "only with blood we efface it! *Kunak,* don't do this; take the girl to a lake and throw her in, it is your right as she is your property, but don't refuse, don't refuse, *kunak!*"

Suliman begged, saluted, wrung his hands, and raved; and during all this time "my wife" decked with flowers the harness of the horses which were to speed over the prairie her master and husband, myself.

I did not sleep the whole night puzzling over what was to be done and occasionally regretted that no deep lake was near; for I should have thrown Suliman into it, and have sent home the girl, giving her as *kalym* or marriage portion, a few pounds of sweets from the village shop.

But what was I to do? What was I to do with this Bibi-Ainé, this "Sweet Lark"?

This thought plagued me during the whole period of our studies on Lake Chany, where by the way we discovered a very curious phenomenon. The lake is salt and has no fish in it, with the extraordinary exception of the northeast bay or corner, which is fresh and teems with carp, tench, pike, and perch. The lake was overgrown with thick bulrushes and surrounded by marshes where wild duck and geese were nesting, having dropped out of the migratory flocks which distributed their members all the way through Siberia to the very shores of the Arctic Ocean. I often went hunting and my *hanoom* tried always to go with me, but I did not allow this to the great despair of Bibi-Ainé and the anger of Suliman.

Finally, she overtook me one day when I was returning from a hunt burdened with ducks and taking the bag of birds from me, asked with her musical voice:

"Is my master always angry with Bibi?"

I felt that the moment of decisive conversation had come, and my blood stood still.

"I am not angry with you, little girl," I said, laughing to cover my real agitation.

"I am no little girl, as my father and brother gave me as *hanoom* to you!" she snapped back angrily.

"I must tell you that you are not my wife, that my faith does not allow me to marry a Mahomedan, Bibi."

"I am your dog and your slave; I shall pray to your God as you pray unto Him," she responded, lowering her beautiful eyes.

Bibi-Ainé had conquered my first line of defense. With all my soul I called to some unknown being for

help; but no one was on the prairie and we still had three miles of road to camp.

Meanwhile, the graceful, comely Kirghiz maiden walked at my side, her heavy breathing and expanded nostrils carrying clear proof of her emotion and determination.

"Your *hanoom* asks you, Master, if she pleases you? Am I not beautiful, quick, and strong? My singing and dancing would they not move your heart, Master mine? Answer me, because I have no word from you and I weep at night. Look, my eyes have dimmed from weeping, especially this left one. Look!"

She stood on tiptoe, looking in my face with these "dimmed" eyes, especially the left one which shone crystal clear.

I looked down at her and stroked her hair.

"All is well; your eyes shine as stars, little Bibi!" I said.

"Oh!" she cried, clapping her hands and throwing the bag on the earth, "then my eyes please you, Master?"

"Very much," I incautiously replied from my habit of telling women only nice things, especially when they ask for them.

"How happy I am!" cried Bibi, jumping about like a lamb. "You will take me to the great town? I shall be your *hanoom?*"

Good Lord! Mahomet the Prophet! More impossible questions!

I remained silent, but my *hanoom,* quite reassured and tranquil, began to chatter. Weary of my problem and seeking distraction, my mind wandered away to Petrograd and took me with it into those surroundings which

would have veritably "dimmed" the prairie lights in the eyes of my *hanoom,* when suddenly I was summoned back by commanding words of hope that came from somewhere. I pulled myself together in time to hear the maiden saying:

"To refuse a girl offered as a *hanoom,* it is to condemn her to certain death as nobody will marry her and she will be obliged, in order to avoid the sneers and disdain of her tribe, to kill herself! This has been the Kirghiz custom for centuries. The only way that the girl can avoid humiliation is for the man to go away in such a manner that the eyes of the forsaken girl will not discern him at the moment his horse or carriage is starting. Then the girl unbinds her hair and wears it loose for three days. After this she pulls three hairs from her head and throws them in the direction the man disappeared. All remembrance of Him will be wafted away with these hairs from her head and the *hanoom* will again be a girl, free to wed another man."

We were already within sight of our fire. I quickened the pace to put a stop to further conversation and especially questions.

"To go away in such a manner that Bibi's eyes could not see me at the moment of departure." This thought did not leave me. But how was I to manage it? Everywhere in the prairie the sharp eyes of Bibi-Ainé and Suliman would follow me. I did not want any harm to befall the girl through my refusing her; I certainly must fly, I must. There was no other way out of it!

The thought became a mania with me. Surely Foch and the other leaders puzzled no more over strategy before the battles with the Germans, than I before my

flight from the side of this maiden, beautiful as the spring and free as the wind on the plains she coursed—this Bibi-Ainé, forcibly presented to me as my *hanoom.*

At last we ended our work on Lake Chany and made our final trip north to Kainsk on the Siberian line.

Suliman and Bibi never left my side and always watched me, with the patent fear that I would bolt. I could not speak with the Professor about my plans, as he was talkative and indiscreet and might easily upset the program that had taken shape in my thoughts.

We arrived at the station an hour before train time. I took the Professor aside under some plausible pretence, and asked him to keep Suliman and the girl occupied with continual orders.

When the train arrived, the bustle and crowd completely bewildered the prairie children. I had given full value to this element in the problem and remained near Suliman and his sister without in any way disclosing my hateful intentions. Outwardly, I was quite calm and resigned. In a booth at the end of the station platform I bought a silver bracelet set with chrysolites as a present for Bibi, and for her brother, my *kunak,* and brother-in-law, a similar ring.

They were overjoyed, exclaiming with admiration and pleasure and showing each other the beautiful gifts, and for a moment seemed to forget their husband and brother-in-law, while this traitor watched the hands of the clock. Before the time of the departure there remained only five minutes . . . three . . . two . . .

I showed the Kirghizi the lights of the stones when they were held in the rays of the sun. While they gazed and admired with astonishment, I slipped into the crowd,

ran round the rear end of the train and reached the steps of a carriage, but not those of the car in which the Professor sat. I crouched down on the steps outside the closed door and waited till a bell, a whistle, the deep breathing of the locomotive, the first shudder of the train, and the rumble of the wheels told me this was the critical moment of departure. I opened the door and slunk into the car as though I were stalking a deer, though this time I was really the game. I carefully concealed myself among the passengers and packages in the third class until the last switches of the station, the last lanterns, the last buildings passed the windows. Even yet I did not go into the Professor's carriage, as I was deadly afraid of finding near him the sweetly smiling face of my *hanoom*. Only at the next station I joined my chief and found to my joy that my *hanoom* was not there. My chrysolites had saved me. Suliman and Bibi were probably still looking at the lights of the stones when the train started and the *hanoom* did not see the face of her traitor-husband when the train was in motion.

"Dear, beautiful Bibi-Ainé!" I thought as the train rumbled away. "Now you will loosen your black hair, smelling of sandal wood and musk, and will pull out three of them to throw toward the setting sun to kill all memory of me. Don't be angry with me! You are beautiful, lithe and gay; you sing as a prairie lark, you dance as a houri of Paradise; you sew on buttons skilfully and broil over the coals most succulent *shashlyk* and tender *azu* as no other woman can; but I could not make you my wife, for what would you do with a tedious book-worm?—and also what would my mother say, so exacting, so meticulous, and so dignified! Good-bye, my

dear little Bibi-Ainé. And may you be happy when you have committed your black hair to the western wind."

Five days later I was in Petrograd and my mother, seeing my sunburnt, blackened face, and my hardened hands, laughed and jokingly remarked:

"There is something of the Tartar in you!"

"Ah!" said I in my mind, "what would you have said, Mother mine, if I had returned to you with the beautiful Bibi-Ainé, my *hanoom* that was to be?"

And then what would my real hanoom have said and done, she to whom I gave no chrysolites but heart and soul, and whom I carefully watch to see that she does not pull from her splendid crown of hair the three fatal ones and cast them to the wind that brings forgetfulness?

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